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THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

LATE REVEREND THOMAS BOSTON
OF ETTRICK;

NOW FIRST COLLECTED, AND REPRINTED WITHOUT ABRIDGMENT;

INCLUDING

HIS MEMOIRS, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

EDITED BY THE

REV. SAMUEL M'MILLAN.

VOL. III.

ABERDEEN:
GEORGE AND ROBERT KING, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.
M.DCCC.XLVIII.

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SERMONS

ON THE MOST

IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS,

DELIVERED CHIEFLY ON

COMMUNION OCCASIONS;

TO WHICH IS APPENDED

SERMONS ON CHURCH COMMUNION,

AND

THE CROOK IN THE LOT.

BY THE

REV. THOMAS BOSTON,

OF ETTRICK.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

ABERDEEN:

GEORGE AND ROBERT KING, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

SERMON I.

PAGE.

THE HAPPINESS OF FEARING ALWAY.

PROV. XXVIII. 14.—Happy is the man that feareth alway, ... 5

SERMON II.

THE INSTABILITY OF HUMAN GOODNESS.

HOSEA VI. 4.—For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away, ... 13

SERMON III.

RATIONAL EVIDENCES FROM HEAVEN ILLUSTRATED.

2 COR. V. 1.—For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, ... 22

SERMON IV.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED, ... 36

SERMON V.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT BEING OFFENDED IN CHRIST.

MATT. XI. 6.—And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, ... 66

SERMON VI.

BELIEVERS LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN.

2 COR. IV. 18.—While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, ... 76

SERMON VII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED, ... 84

144054

PAGE.

SERMON VIII.

CHRIST'S DEMANDING ADMISSION INTO SINNERS' HEARTS.

PSALM XXIV. 9.—Lift up your heads, O ye gates: even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in, ... 93

SERMON IX.

CHRIST'S INVITATION TO HIS BRIDE.

SONG IV. 8.—Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lion's dens, from the mountains of the leopards, ... 118

SERMON X.

CAUTIONS AGAINST QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

1 THESS. V. 19.—Quench not the Spirit, ... 129

SERMON XI.

SAINTS WRESTLING FOR THE BLESSING, AND OBTAINING IT.

GEN. XXXII. 26.—And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Ver. 29. And he blessed him there, ... 150

SERMON XII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED, ... 157

SERMON XIII.

SUITABLE IMPROVEMENT OF CHRIST THE APPLE TREE.

SONG II. 3.—I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste, ... 165

SERMON XIV.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED, ... 174

SERMON XV.

THE SINS OF SINNERS FINDING THEM OUT.

NUMB. XXXII. 23.—And be sure your sin will find you out, ... 180

SERMON XVI.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED, ... 185

Page.

SERMON XVII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED, ... 191

SERMON XVIII.

THE GREAT DANGER OF PROFESSORS WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

Rom. i. 18.—For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, 214

SERMON XIX.

THE EVIL OF CHRIST'S FRIENDS LIFTING UP THEIR HEEL AGAINST HIM.

Psalm xli. 9.—Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me, ... 253

SERMON XX.

PRESENT ROOM FOR SINNERS IN CHRIST'S HOUSE.

Luke xiv. 22.—And yet there is room, ... 260

SERMON XXI.

HUNGERING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Matt. v. 6.—Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled, ... 272

SERMON XXII.

CHRISTIANS STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

2 Tim. ii. 1.—Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ... 280

SERMON XXIII.

MAN, SINFUL MAN, IS A COMPLIANING CREATURE.

Lam. iii. 39.—Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? 287

SERMON XXIV.

THE PLEASURES OF REAL RELIGION.

Prov. iii. 17.—Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, 305

PAGE.

SERMON XXV.

THOSE THAT ARE IN CHRIST ARE DEAD TO THE WORLD.

COL. III. 3.—For ye are dead, ... 342

SERMON XXVI.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

ZECH. XII. 12.—And the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart, ... 354

SERMON XXVII.

THANKSGIVING FOR MY CONTINUANCE IN ETTRICK.

PROV. XXIX. 18.—Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he, ... 372

SERMON XXVIII.

UNFRUITFUL PROFESSORS CUT DOWN AS CUMBERERS OF THE GROUND.

LUKE XIII. 7.—Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground, ... 379

SERMON XXIX.

THE GREAT DESIRE OF THE SAINTS.

PSALM. IV. 6.—Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, ... 385

SERMON XXX.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED, ... 391

SERMON XXXI.

THE DUTY OF YIELDING OURSELVES TO THE LORD.

2 CHRON. XXX. 8.—Now, be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever; and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you, ... 397

SERMON XXXII.

AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

MARK X. 21.—Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest, ... 411

PAGE.

SERMON XXXIII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

MARK X. 21.—(Second clause) Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, ... 431

SERMON XXXIV.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

MARK X. 21.—(Second clause) Sell whatsoever thou hast, ... 441

SERMON XXXV.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

MARK X. 21.—(Second clause) And give to the poor, ... 456

SERMON XXXVI.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

MARK X. 21.—(Second clause) And thou shalt have treasure in heaven, ... 461

SERMON XXXVII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

MARK X. 21.—(Third clause) And come, take up the cross, and follow me, 473

SERMON XXXVIII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

MARK X. 22.—And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions, ... 486

CROOK IN THE LOT.

ECCLES. VII. 13.—Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked? 495

PROV. XVI. 19.—Better is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud, ... 538

1 PET. V. 6.—Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, ... 552

ON CHURCH COMMUNION.

1 COR. X. 17.—For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread, ... 591

COMMUNION SERMONS.

Askirk Communion, Monday, August, 1709.

THE HAPPINESS OF FEARING ALWAY.

SERMON I.

PROVERBS xxviii. 14.

Happy is the man that feareth alway.

IF these words have any connection with the preceding verse, they must be taken as an evidence of the sincerity of him who confesseth and forsaketh his sins. Such an one will be afraid of sin for the future, having felt the smart of it. Or the text may be taken as a direction to such, how to avoid relapsing into a sinful course. They must fear alway.

You, in this place, have been confessing, preparing, and communicating. It is probable, that at this solemnity you have been brought to say, *How dreadful is this place!* But the fear of many quickly decays, and they become fearless, as if bread and wine could of themselves be armour proof against temptations; or did entitle them to a liberty of sinning safely. Nay, but if you would prove your sincerity, if you would not relapse into your old sins, then be not high minded but fear. Thus you shall be happy indeed. *For happy is the man that feareth alway.*

Here we have a duty proposed, *fear*, a necessary qualification of this duty stated, *alway*, and the advantage which arises from it. *Happy* is the man that feareth alway.

In prosecuting this subject, I shall,

I. Shew what that *fear* is which men ought to maintain alway.

II. I shall condescend on some things, with respect to which, we are in a special manner to entertain this holy fear.

III. Consider the necessary qualifications of this duty, *alway*. And,

IV. The advantage attending it. *Happy* is the man that feareth alway. We are then,

. I. To shew what that fear is which men ought to maintain alway. The religious fear meant in the text comprehends two things,

1. A fear of God for himself. "Sanctify" says the Prophet, "the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." This is the case when men beholding the greatness, majesty, and holiness of God, have a holy fear of him raised in their spirits.

2. A fear of other things for God, or in reference to him. Thus we are to be afraid of sin, and whatsoever puts us in hazard of offending God. For religious holy fear still terminates in God. Now according to what hath been said, must this fear be explained. We ought then to entertain,

1. A filial and reverential fear of God. "God is greatly to be feared among the assembly of the saints."—Slavish fear of God will never denominate, nor make a man happy. In reprobates it is the beginning of hell that *makes them tremble;* and even in the elect it is like a spark of hell to make them look after heaven. Slavish fear of God is a turbulent violent storm in the soul that takes away the heart, and often binds up the hands from duty. Thus Adam under its influence hid himself. But filial fear glides softly through the soul, watering it to bring forth the fruits of holiness. Slavish fear dreads nothing but hell and punishment. Filial fear dreads sin itself. The displeasing of God is a frightful object in itself to the saint. Slavish fear looks at eternal wrath with expectation of it. Filial fear also looks at wrath, but not with expectation, though with dread and terror. The one is mixed with hatred of God, the other with love to him—the one looks on him as a revenging judge, the other as a holy father, to whose holiness the heart is reconciled and the soul longs to be conformed.

2. We must entertain a fear of jealousy over ourselves. This Paul had over the Corinthians. "I am jealous, says he, over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtility, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Now such a fear as this would suit communicants well. Such a fear seized the disciples—Me, Is it I? said each for himself. He ist he happy man who trusteth not his own heart, but keeps a jealous eye over it. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely he shall be delivered." This holy self-jealousy, the apostle strongly presseth. "Be not high minded," says he, "but fear."

3. A fear of caution and circumspection. When a man is much

afraid of snares in his way he takes good heed where and how he walks. He proceeds with fear and trembling. This fear made David say, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." This makes a man walk warily, *softly* as Hezekiah expresseth it. It sets the eyes of the mind to work to discern the hazard, and so to escape it.

II. I shall condescend on some things with respect to which we are in a special manner to entertain this holy fear, lest we offend in them.

1. Happy is he that feareth alway with respect to himself. Every man is his own nearest neighbour, and so his worst enemy is nearest to him. Happy is the man that keeps a jealous eye over himself. "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things that thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life." And there are four things about yourselves which you have need to fear; to be jealous over them, and circumspect about them, lest you offend God in them and by them.

1. Your heads, your principles. God is a God of truth as well as holiness. There are soul ruining principles as well as practices. The spirit of delusion rageth. New doctrines please those who have not had the spiritual relish, nor felt the efficacy of the old upon their hearts. "The time will come," says Paul, "when they will not endure sound doctrine." These he calls perilous times, and in them men shall be *heady* and *high minded*. Now a perilous time is a time for fear. Why do these things prevail but because men are rash and fearless about them. There is a certain fondness of new notions, and hence, men are caught in the trap before they are aware.

2. Your hearts. "Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." The heart is the principle of action as the eye is the light of the body. Great need then is there for the heart to be pure. O! what need to entertain this holy fear with respect to the heart; *for it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*. If you would have the streams pure you must look well to the fountain. To keep this jealous eye over the conversation and not over the heart, is to shut the door while the thief is in the house. And therefore entertain a holy fear with respect to the thoughts of your hearts. They may offend God as well as your outward actions. "O Jerusalem," says Jeremiah, "wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee." Thoughts are the offspring of our hearts. We had need then to take heed to them, that we may suppress those evil

thoughts in the birth which otherwise may swarm outward and defile the whole man. For "that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man." One wandering thought has sometimes been a wide door through which the soul's life and vigour, in duties, have gone out; the thought being like a dart suddenly struck through the liver of a bird while it has been singing on a branch.

Guard also the affections of your hearts. Good affections are tender buds of heaven easily checked and made to wither; and bad ones like ill weeds grow apace. How ready are our affections to go astray. At one time they set on unlawful objects, and at another they fix immoderately on those that are lawful, and when once let loose, they run like fire in a train. The wandering of the desire is a vanity and vexation of spirit. As we would be afraid to let an untamed colt slip the bridle, so ought we, with the greatest care, to keep rule over our own spirits.

3. Your tongues. "The tongue is a little member but boasteth great things. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." It is dangerous to ride on an unbridled horse, and equally dangerous to have an unbridled tongue. "I will keep my mouth," says David, "with a bridle while the wicked is before me." Again says he, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips." He was afraid something might break out to the dishonour of God. Words are of the greatest consequence. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'

4. Your senses. These are the gates of the soul, and when the town is besieged, there must be strict watch kept at the gates. Satan lays his trains at these gates, and if we do not take good heed, the whole soul may be set on fire. By the eyes and the ears, did the devil blow up all mankind in Adam and Eve. The eyes ruined Achan, and grievously wounded David. Job was so afraid of them, that he was glad to make a covenant with them. Happy then is he that feareth them.

2dly. We should entertain this holy fear with respect to our lusts and corruptions. He fears God. He is happy who can say he fears nothing so much as sin. You must fear the sin of your nature, the old man, that woful bent of the soul to evil. O! how much was the apostle afraid of it; when he said, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? It reigns as king in the unregenerated, dwells as a troublesome guest in the regenerated, and endeavours to recover the command. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in the lusts thereof." They cannot be safe without fear who lodge such a guest. Due fear of this would set us on our guard against it, and send us to the Lord for his grace to mortify it.

You must be on your guard also against the sins by which you have been formerly led away; "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." These forsaken lovers will again make suit to you, and will get in upon you, if you grow secure. They will not want agents for them, though the devil should stir up the wife of your bosom for that end.—Whether they are crucified or not, you are in hazard and must be on your guard against them. You must also be afraid of the sins to which you find yourselves most inclined. Every man has *his sin that doth most easily beset him;* and where the wall is weakest it should be best guarded. Like David, we must keep ourselves from our iniquity.

Little sins must be dreaded. There is no sin little with respect to the infinite Majesty offended, or the reward of it due by justice. A man may be drowned in a small stream as well as in the ocean. The little thief makes least noise, but opens the door to the rest. A look to Bathsheba in the end broke David's vows. Satan ruins many this way, bringing them on by little and little, who would be alarmed at gross sins, in which he appears with his cloven foot. It is evident also that gross sins should be dreaded. O! how many professors fall scandalously. And why? because they are secure as to these, and so are caught in their security. Here what a watch-word Christ gave his disciples, "Take heed to yourselves," said he, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Let no person then, whatever his attainments are, be sure in this point. For the seeds of the grossest sins are originally in every man's heart. The best of men have been overtaken by them, even after the strongest obligations to duty, and there is a principle of sloth in the best. Hence it follows that all occasions of sin should be feared. It is very dangerous for a man with bags of powder about him to walk amidst sparks of fire. Peter, in the high priest's hall, was soon ensnared. Sin having a lodging within wants only an occasion to come out, therefore restrain your lusts by fearing the occasions of sin, and particularly ill company. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." Temptations are dangerous things, "therefore watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." You live amidst many snares, be then always upon your guard, and keep yourself out of the way of temptation.

3dly. We should entertain this holy fear with respect to our graces. Grace is that holy fire sent from heaven into our hearts, which must not be neglected. It *is a gift* to be stirred up. It is in

hazard of decay, though not of death. Though the root will remain, yet it may be overgrown and hid. The way to keep the treasure is to fear.

4thly. We should entertain this holy fear with respect to our duties. The whole worship and service of God is called fear; so necessary is our fear in approaching to him. "In thy fear," says David, "will I worship toward thy holy temple." In this there is cause of fear. For "when we do good evil is present with us." Satan also is busy to cast some dead fly to spoil the whole, making it unacceptable to God and unprofitable to us.

Finally, This fear must be exercised about your attainments. They are in hazard of being lost. "Let us look then to ourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." Those of you that have got any thing from the Lord on this occasion, Satan will set himself to rob you of it. Feed then with fear, on what has been given you. If it be only a conviction it is worth the keeping. Satan will think it worth his pains to take it away. O! let not the fire get out by neglecting it. "Despise not the day of small things." The cloud like a man's hand may cover the face of the heavens if cherished. Observe the diligence of the spouse. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." Hear also Hezekiah, "What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul." We are now,

III. To consider the necessary qualification of this duty, *alway*. Happy is the man that feareth *alway*.—This fear must be our habitual and constant work. It must go through the whole of our lives, till we be in the place where there is no hazard of sinning. This fear should season all we do, and be with us in all times, cases, conditions, places, and companies.

Reason 1. Because we have always the enemy within our walls: "A heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Now can men sleep securely when assassins are within their house? Constant danger requires constant fear and watchfulness. While a body of sin remains with us, temptations will always be presenting themselves.

2. Because there are snares for us in all places and in all circumstances. Satan is busy and has filled the world with traps; therefore "see that ye walk circumspectly not as fools, but as wise." In the wilderness Christ was tempted. Peter in company; and Eve when alone. There are snares in our lawful enjoyments.—Snares at home, in the field, waking, in our bed, or at our table we are beset

with them. Many ditches are in our way, and many of these are so concealed that we may fall completley into them before we are aware.—At all times we are beset. Men may have great privileges, but none have freedom from temptation.—Many have fallen so soon after a communion, that it would seem the devil had gone down with the sop.—We proceed,

IV. To consider the advantage attending this duty, *Happy is the man that feareth alway.* He is *happy*, for,

1. This prevents much sin, and advanceth holiness of heart and life. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." He that fears to offend God is most likely to keep his way; and he that fears snares in his way is most ready to escape them.

2. It prevents strokes from the Lord's hand. Where sin dines, judgment will sup. He that feareth the bait, will escape the hook. Both these may be gained from the antithesis in the text. Pride goes before a fall. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Now holy fear prevents these falls. It is an excellent ballast to a light, vain, and frothy heart. It is dangerous sailing in a ship without ballast; and that heart that is without this fear will soon discover itself. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." This fear is a restraint upon the mind of man, without which no man can rule his own spirit. This fear breaks many snares. The fear of man *bringeth a snare.* How many are led aside by the fear of man? They are unwilling to offend men, they desire to please the company. But holy fear takes away this. It teaches us to fear God, and not man. It makes the soul exert all its care to please God whoever be offended.

3. This fear carries the soul out of itself to the Lord Jesus Christ, the fountain of light, life, and strength. It empties a man of self confidence, and so makes way for the influences of grace. It leads the soul to the rock higher than itself. Thus when the man is weak, then is he strong.

For the improvement of what has been said, I exhort all of you to fear *alway.*

1. You who are in a joyful frame, join trembling with your mirth. You are in a paradise, but though you are, the serpent will conceal himself there till he turn you out of it, if you entertain not this holy fear.

2. You that are in a mournful frame *fear alway.* Satan can lay a snare for you in the house of mourning, and set his traps in the midst of your tears.

3. You that have not met with Christ, and therefore cannot rejoice, nor miss him and therefore mourn, but are going away as you came, stupid, senseless, and unconcerned; what shall I say to you? Shall I bid you fear to offend in your walk, after you have had the audacity solemnly to mock God at his table? Nay, but fear lest the devil has gone down with the sop, and that he has got a faster hold of you than ever he had before; your affections are more deadened and your consciences more seared. "Thus your last state will be worse than your first." Fear lest there be some black hour abiding you in which God will take the mask from your face by letting you fall into the mire. For he hath said, "Because thou art luke warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Then cast forth as a branch you will wither, losing both fruit and leaf.

Fear lest the Lord make a breach in you for profaning the secret symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. God made a breach upon his ancient people when they sought him not after the due order. 1 Chron. xv. 13. And for your very sin, many among the Corinthians were visited with heavy judgments. 1 Cor. xi. 29, 30. Wherefore look to yourselves, and when you go home, review what you have been doing. Repent, and yet give yourselves away honestly to Christ. His blood is able to save them that have shed it. From him you may receive the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Lastly, To all of you, I say fear alway. Carry this fear home with you. Perhaps you may meet with a temptation before you get home, or as soon as you enter your own house. Something may appear wrong that will be a fire to blow up your corruptions. Perhaps you may meet with a temptation from the quarter you least expect it. *Happy is the man that feareth alway.* The Lord will carry him through, till he bring him to the place where all fear of evil shall be banished for ever. Amen.

Selkirk Communion, August, 1710.

THE INSTABILITY OF HUMAN GOODNESS.

SERMON II.

HOSEA vi. 4.

For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

THE case of many at our communions this day is such, that when they are at them, it seems pity they should ever go from them till they sit down at the table above; and when they are from them a little while, it seems pity they should ever go to them again.—When they are at them, the smell of their communion frame is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed. When they are from them, the smell of their ordinary walk is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath cursed; smelling *rank* of the root of bitterness.—Men know not what to make of them. No wonder, (with reverence be it spoken,) seeing God knows not what to do with them. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?" As if a Physician despairing of his patient should say, I have tried many remedies, but none avail to perfect the cure. You still again cast yourself into the disease. Ephraim and Judah were neither made better by promises nor threatenings, so that their case was very hopeless, and nothing seemed to remain but that the Lord should leave them.

In the text we have that which made their case so very hopeless. They had at times some goodness.—Hebrew, *Kindness*. They had at times some kindness for God and his way; some warmth of affections towards good, that they seemed to be believing on Christ, and entirely to give up their idols: so that they were sometimes almost gained. Yet it was but sometimes. They remained not long in that frame. Their half kindness did not last; they even turned back again to their old bias. Their goodness was passing goodness. This instability of theirs is held forth by the similitude, first, of *a morning cloud*. A cloud which out of the remains of the night appears in the morning promising a heavy shower, to make the ground fruitful; but whenever the sun riseth the cloud vanisheth away, and disappoints the expectation of the husbandman.

Next this transitory goodness is represented by *the early dew*. The dew which falls in the morning upon the fields, and seems to be

in a fair way to bring forward the increase of the earth. But as soon as the sun is up, and beats upon it with its beams, it evaporates and is gone. He seems to allude to the morning sacrifices of both these people; at which they appeared very serious and devout; but when the sacrifices were over, and they went home, they even returned to their old trade of sin. Now if they had had no goodness at any time, their sin would have been more easily charged home upon them, and the arrows of God's threatenings would have more easily pierced their breasts. But now they had so much goodness as made them proof against threatenings, but yet not so much as could wrap them up in the promises.

Doctrine. Such is the instability of many in the good way of the Lord, that the goodness at which they sometimes arrive, passeth away as a morning cloud, and as the early dew.

I. I shall shew in what respects the goodness of many passeth away as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.

II. I shall give the reasons of the point. And then add some improvement. We are then,

I. To shew in what respects the goodness of many passeth away as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.

It is certain that the goodness of the saints cannot pass away totally, nor finally. "For whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." But even the saints may lose much of the degrees of grace; and as for others they may totally lose all that they have. In one sense the point holds with respect to both.

1. Men's goodness often goes away very quickly as the morning cloud which appears only a very short while. "Then believed they his words; they sang his praise. They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel." Many a time a dark cloud quickly comes over men, so that their sun seems to go down at noon-day; and their leaking vessels sometimes full are speedily run out. Their goodness is like the moon in a cloudy night, that sometimes shines forth brightly, but anon deserts the traveller: so that the strong man becomes weak as Samson without his hair. And it may be observed, That men's goodness often goes quickly away, after they have solemnly engaged themselves to the Lord. "When Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all his judgments, then all the people answered with one voice and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Yet in a very short time after this it is recorded; "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf and have worshipped it." This was not peculiar to them.

How quickly after the first communion was the edge of the spirit of the disciples blunted. Mark xiv. 37. They could not watch with their master one hour. Their resolutions vanished into smoke whenever the temptation appeared. The mighty men that *would die* with their master could not find their hands in the day of battle, though they found their feet to forsake him and flee away; and one of them found his tongue to deny him. At such a time Satan is most busy, for then they are better worth the catching than before. Now their sins will bring more dishonour to God and to religion, and how often do they then fall as ripe fruit into the mouth of the devourer.

The same thing also often happens, after some more than ordinary enjoyments. Immediately after the most delightful fellowship with Christ, we hear the spouse saying, *I sleep:* and in this frame refuses to open to her beloved. Satan envies the happiness of men, and tries to rob them of it: even as the pirate attacks the ship that is most richly laden. The hearts of the disciples were melted with the sight of Christ's miracle. Mark vi. But a hard frost quickly seized them. Verse 52. "They considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened." Our hearts are as stones, in point of receiving impressions, but as the sand for retaining them. The wind of temptation quickly obliterates them. Even then the heart is ready to swell with pride, and when it begins to rise, it will quickly, like Jordan, overflow its banks. Even Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh to keep him from being exalted above measure by his high enjoyments.

In like manner, goodness often passes quickly away after deliverance from trouble. In a time of affliction the goodness of many is apparently great, yet it quickly vanisheth when the deliverance comes. In the time of a heavy rain every pool is filled to the brim, but in fair weather they soon dry up. Afflictions drive men to God as winter storms oblige them to keep the house. But, O! it is hard to keep at home when the earth's decayed face is renewed, and all nature again flourishes. While the excitement is at the nightingale's breast, it awakes and sings in the night, but when it is away it sleeps in the day. This was sadly exemplified in the case of Noah, Gen. ix. 20. Of Lot, Gen. xix. 31. Hezekiah, Chron. xxxii. 25. And of the Israelites, Psal. lxxviii. 34. and downwards. This is the reason why the Lord so often makes the clouds return after the rain.

2. Men's goodness often goeth away very easily, even as the morning clouds will pass away without the blustering noise of wind, and the warm beams of the sun easily exhale the early dew; but not

more easily than men's goodness goes off their spirits. The devil does not always act the part of a roaring lion when he intends to strip people of their attained goodness, but in this work advances with a soft pace. We may observe that men's goodness ordinarily goes away by degrees, almost imperceptibly. Few all of a sudden become apostates. Carnal security creeps on leisurely on men, till by it they are taken off their feet. Their goodness, like the light of day after the setting of the sun, goes away by little and little. It goes away also on very slender occasions. The voice of a maid makes Peter's goodness pass away, and instead of holding by his good resolutions, he sins grievously by denying his master. It is a piece of Satan's policy to attack people with slender temptations at first, when he designs to rob them; for then they think they are strong enough for them, therefore they grapple with them on their own strength and are foiled. A small temptation will take off the chariot wheels of the soul. An unseasonable thought has sometimes proved a wide door, by which a good frame has escaped. How great a matter does a little fire kindle.

3. Men's goodness goes off as the morning cloud, when there is most need for it to stay. The morning cloud goes away most readily in time of drought, when the earth stands most in need of it. And though the goodness of men may last while they meet not with temptations, yet when temptation comes it is often a-missing. Demas held on till the present world was laid in his way, but his goodness could not carry him over it. It is much to be feared, that if the sound of the communion sermons were once out of the heads of some of you, and you meet with your old companions, and with new temptations, you will be just where you were.

It hath often been seen, that the goodness of many passeth away in a time of persecution for the gospel.—"Because they have no root they wither away." As the heat of summer produces many insects which are not to be seen in the frost of winter; so the time of peace in the church produces many false friends who will never stand the shock of trouble for the gospel.—There are many fair fowls that can stay with us in the summer, but depart at the approach of winter.—When Christ is riding in triumph the streets of Jerusalem will be crowded with persons crying, Hosannah; but when the scene changes they will be found on the other side, crying, crucify him.

Again our goodness is ready to pass away when we are called to duty. Paul himself found "that when he would do good, evil was present with him." The hearts of men are never more apt to misgive than when they have most to do with them; and never more

ready to be abroad than when they should be at home, to meet with the Lord in duties. How often when the sacrifice is offered is the heart a wanting, and this presages sad things. The public assemblies are witnesses of this. What a chill cold then often benumbs men's spiritual senses! What distractions, wandering, wearying, and deadness often seize them. The preacher often speaks to the deaf. And our churches are filled with idols which have eyes, but see not, and ears, but hear not. The word often makes stones of Abraham's children, instead of raising up of them children to Abraham. In our secret duties this appears; woful dryness suddenly unfits us for them. When the man is on the mount of God, the heart falls a roving, and with the fool's eyes, goes through the ends of the earth. Though the eyes be closed, the goodness escapes, and they see a thousand vanities. The heart leaves the tongue, and there is so little vital heat within that the word dies in our mouths. We now proceed,

II. To give the reasons of the point. The goodness of many thus passeth away. Because,

1. Many, for all their goodness, have not the living Spirit of Christ dwelling in them. They have received only some common operations of the Spirit, which, like a slight shower of rain, wets only the surface of the earth but never goes deep, and so is quickly dried up. They do not, like Caleb, follow the Lord fully, because they have not the spirit which he had. They have only awakening, not changing, and sanctifying grace; therefore it decays by little and little till it sets in darkness. Their reigning sloth is only covered, not subdued, the root of it is not struck at, hence it riseth again as weeds do in the spring. Thus it is said of the stony ground hearers, "that when the sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had no root, they withered away."

2. Because the souls of many do not unite with Christ, who is the only head of influence. "If a man, saith Jesus, abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned." Take a branch and ingraft it, bind it up; it will keep green for a time indeed; but if it take not with the stock, it will undoubtedly soon wither. And thus, though there may be a sacramental ingrafting into Christ, and the man be bound up with these holy bands about him; yet if he unite not with Christ by a lively faith, he can draw no nourishment from him; and if so, his goodness must certainly go away. Hence the goodness of many goes and is never recovered.

3. Because with many, religion is not their proper element. It is a forced matter with them, that they have any at all; either by the

power of credit, or a restless conscience. In a word, self-love is their highest principle, Psal. lxxviii. and downwards. They have no real love to the Lord, nor does the intrinsic beauty of holiness recommend it to them. Though a stone may abide a while in the air, by the strength of the person who throws it, yet its natural weight will bring it down again. And thus men, though brought into Christ's palace, yet still retaining their swinish nature, will return to their wallowing in the mire.

4. Because they have no spirit for difficulties and disappointments. Many will knock at heaven's gate that cannot endure to use violence and take it by force. "Strive, saith Jesus, to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." They see heaven afar off, and would fain be there, but they shrink back when they see the gulf which they have no heart to sail over. They go forward cheerfully while things are laid to their hand; but disappointments take heart and hand from them, and they are knocked in the head. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; but the fearful and unbelieving," as well as gross sinners of every class, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." They cannot wait on at Christ's gate. They know not what it is to have their appetite sharpened with disappointments; but as soon as they feel not that sweetness in religion which they imagined, they go directly to their old lusts; and find in them what they could not find in religion.

5. Another reason is, the entertaining of unmortified lusts, which are like the suckers that draw the sap from the tree and make it barren. It is hard to get wet wood to take fire, but harder to get it to keep in the fire, but hardest of all, to get a heart polluted with, and enslaved to vile affections, to retain any attained goodness. They that have many friends in the enemy's camp will find their hands sore bound up in the day of battle. It is with many as with David in the battle against Absalom. Upon the one hand it was hard to lose a kingdom: on the other, to lose a son: "therefore," said he, "deal gently with the young man for my sake." That heart will not abide with God that has secret filthy lusts to nourish.

6. The world has a great hand in this. The profits and pleasures of the world soon charm away men's goodness. Like the thorny ground hearers, when many have heard, "they go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." If the earth once get in between us and the Sun of Righteousness, there will be a dreadful eclipse in our goodness. Cares of the world have their name from dividing and rend-

ing the mind asunder, whereby men's goodness hath a wide gate to go out at. They are tenter hooks of the soul, the black devils that draw men from God, and from that sweetness that is in the enjoyment of him, and drive them like the demoniac among the tombs in the region of the dead. They are the wasps and flies that buzz about and sting the soul when it should rest in the bosom of God. And for the pleasures of the world, when they once get a hold of the heart, they quickly run away with it. "Whoredom, wine, and new wine," says the Prophet, "take away the heart." Sensuality is a deep gulf, in which people's goodness will quickly drown. Sensual pleasures are waters that will soon put out the holy fire. But alas! many are like those amphibious birds that both fly and swim, and if they mount at any time towards heaven, they are quickly swimming again in the waters of sensuality that drown their goodness.

Lastly. Unwatchfulness over the heart and life. Our goodness is a tender bud that will easily be blasted if we do not take all possible care of it. "Keep thy heart," says the wise man, "with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The heart is no more to be trusted to itself than a wild ass used to the wilderness. Therefore keep it as a prison:—as a besieged city; as the priests and Levites kept the holy things intrusted to their care. He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. Such a city can restrain none that would depart, and prevent none that would enter. What wonder then, if in such a case our goodness goes away, when there is no watching; for such a soul is like a great fair, where some are going out, some entering, and those within are all in confusion.

Use.—I would exhort you then, that have attained to any thing of goodness or kindness to the Lord in his way, that you would set yourselves to hold it fast. O leave it not here! O let it not pass away with this communion. Carry it home with you and cherish it there; and let it appear in your future conversation. I hope there may be some that are going away crying, they have seen the King in his beauty; and they know that they have seen him; their eyes have beheld his beauty; they have heard his voice in the inmost parts of their souls. Perhaps they came in bonds, and the Lord has given orders, and the prisoner is loosed. Their chains of soul distress have been taken away, by a fair view of the righteousness of the Mediator, the great interpreter of the Father's mind. Job xxxiii. 23, 24, 25. God has looked their unbelief out of countenance and given them joy in believing. Well, brethren, hold fast. The highest enjoyment is liable to changes. Be thankful. Let the high praises

of God be in your mouths. Walk humbly. Though you be adorned with shining feathers, yet look to your black feet and walk softly like Hezekiah. Walk also watchfully. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Glory more in the giver than in the gifts. If you would have your comfort to last, then draw your comfort more from the grace of Christ without you, than from the grace of Christ within you. "We are to rejoice in Christ Jesus, but to have no confidence in the flesh." Only beware that you do not so much fear the loss of the enjoyment, as to bind up your hands from improving this golden spot of your time. Sometimes Satan prevails so to fill the heart with fear in this case, that persons fear themselves out of ease and never cease to be jealous of Christ, till that which they fear come upon them. Rather do as Moses. "He made haste and bowed his head and worshipped. And he said, if now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us, (for it is a stiff necked people,) and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." Some will say, alas! we have nothing to lose. Indeed it is likely there are some that will go away as empty of goodness as they came. They looked for nothing, and they have got as little. They are the devil's obedient captives that will neither stir hand nor foot to get out of his chains. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Such persons as these will not complain of a grieved heart. Therefore I say, if your hearts be affected with a sense of your wants; if you have any of the desires of God's children after the Lord; if you see more of your own vileness of heart and life, and have formed resolutions to be for God and none else; if it were but a conviction, it is worth your pains to keep it. And I exhort you not to overlook it, lest it pass away as a morning cloud.

1. Consider Satan will think it worth his pains to rob you of it, however little there be of it. The prince of darkness will set himself against the least ray of light. His experience tells him, that it is easiest to crush people's goodness in the bud, and not to let the flame spread.

2. Our Lord is very tender of small beginnings, where there is some good thing found in a person toward himself. "A bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." Be not you careless of that, of which he is so tender. Though you have not felt a full shower of influences, but only a few drops, yet let not these go away.

3. Great things may arise from small beginnings. The cloud like a man's hand, may soon darken the heavens if cherished. The grain of mustard seed may soon become a tree; and a little leaven will leaven the whole lump. "And then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."

Lastly. The less you have, you had need take the more care not to lose it, and be the more diligent to improve it.—If you be set any way with a small stock, then double your diligence, and keep closely to your work.

Advices 1. Do not sit down contented with any measure that you have attained. Alas! little satisfies people in religion. He that does not exert himself to grow, will assuredly decay. "Do not think that you have already attained, or are already perfect; but follow after, if that you may apprehend that for which also you are apprehended of Christ Jesus." Labour to make *two* talents of your *one* by industry. The fire will be extinguished by withholding fuel, as well as by throwing water upon it.

2. Keep up a holy jealousy over your own hearts. You hear that the goodness of some is as the early cloud, and the morning dew, it passeth away. This should make us say, each for himself, Lord is it I? "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." If you be saying with Hazael, "Am I a dog, that I should do this?" Look that you be not the dog, that will be among the first to do it.

3. Put what you have in the Lord's hand. Depend upon him and wait about his hand for more influences. For this purpose be much in prayer. You may come to get that in secret, which you have not got at the table.

Lastly, And what I say to one I say to all, watch. The time is short. Watch, and ere long you shall be in that place, where the gates are not shut by day, and there is no night there. But if any man draw back, the Lord's Spirit will have no pleasure in him. Amen.

Forenoon Sermons, Ettrick, Feb. 13, 1715.

RATIONAL EVIDENCES FOR HEAVEN, ILLUSTRATED.

SERMON III.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 1.

For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

THE breach which the Lord made amongst us so suddenly last Sabbath, is a loud call to us all to be making ready, and to be always ready for another world.* We all know that we must die: none of us know how, or when. Let us then be sparing of our judgment, and take the lesson to ourselves. Luke xiii. 1—5.

To pursue this providential call, with the call of the word, I have chosen this text. That persons may go to heaven without clear evidence for heaven, I doubt not. But it has often been a very serious consideration to me, to think, that although there are very few people with whom we can meet on a death bed but have hopes of heaven; yet there are so very few that can give any rational scriptural grounds and evidences of their hope. This determined me some time ago, to urge the seeking of evidences, that whatever God in holy sovereignty may do, yet people may not through mere sloth and laziness, make but a leap in the dark into eternity, if they will be warned.

In the words of the text there are three things.

1. Something supposed. Two things are here supposed.

1. That the body will die and return to the dust. *If our earthly house* of this tabernacle were dissolved. This, if, is not for doubting, but supposes it beyond all doubt. Consider what the body is. It is but a house. And observe who is the inhabitant of this house. It is the soul. The body is *our house.* The soul is the man, and is as much preferable to the body, as the inhabitant is to the cottage in which he dwells. Observe also what kind of a house it is. It is an *earthly house.* A mud wall house patched up of earth. A house merely for the short time we are to be on earth. Nay, it is rather a tabernacle or a tent. It is the tent in which the soul dwells or sojourns, as persons do in a tent. Paul was a tent maker, and he

* A healthy old man fell down dead, a little way from the church. See the Author's memoirs, at the above date.

takes a lesson of his frailty from what used to be among his hands. A house may be weak, but a tent is still weaker.

Consider also what death is. It is a dissolving of the tent, a loosing of the frame of it, and then it falls down. Our bodies are not castles and towers that must be blown up, or battered down by main force: not even ordinary houses that must be pulled down with strength of hand. But tents, where there is nothing more to do but to loose the cords, and pull up the pins, and immediately it lies along.

2. It is supposed that the saints when they die, make an exchange much for the better. When they are turned out of this earthly house they are received into a "building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Some by this understand the glorified condition of the body, when it shall be spiritual, immortal, and incorruptible. But that cannot be, for that does not take place till the resurrection. This immediately after death, Verse 8, "We are confident, says the apostle, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." It is meant of the glorious state of the saints in another life, even of that glory in which the souls of believers shall dwell, when they depart out of this tabernacle.

3. We have in the text a confident application of this blessed privilege of having a building of God. It is applied with the greatest assurance by the apostle in his own name, and in the name of other saints that walked in the view of heaven. *We know that we have.* Not so much by extraordinary revelation, as by certain signs, and evidences grounded upon the testimony of the word without us, and of our own spirits and God's Spirit within us. For whatever the apostle himself enjoyed of revelation was not common to the saints as this is.

4. There is the blessed influence this had on their suffering patiently intimated in the particle. *For we know.* They bore sufferings *without fainting*, chap. iv. 16. Because they had the glory of heaven in their view. And they knew assuredly, that they would attain it after death. Therefore they were not afraid of suffering.

Doctrine I.—The body is only the house of the soul, and but an earthly house too. As a man lodgeth in his house, so does the soul in the body till death come, and it departs from it. I shall here shew,

I. What kind of a house the body is to the soul.

II. I shall take notice of some of the peculiarities of this house.

I. We are to shew what kind of a house the body is to the soul.

1. It is only a lodging house. The soul is not sent to dwell in it,

but to sojourn and lodge in it, while on the way to another world. "We are strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were." The body is our lodging house. Heaven or hell is our dwelling house, where we will abide for ever.

2. It is a weak house. The soul in the body is not lodged as in a tower or castle. It is not a fort, but a weak house that is broken soon up by disease and soon broken down by death. The strongest body is such. For the walls are but of mud, a house of clay, Job iv. 19. and cannot stand long nor abide a severe shock.

Let none deceive themselves with respect to their strength. There are no stones in the walls of this house; no brass nor iron in it. It must needs then be a weak house. "Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh brass?" No, only mud refined and tempered by the Creator's hand, but now disordered by sin. We may indeed be fine, but must be weak.

The foundation of it is in the dust. Job iv. 19. Were a house of clay built upon a rock it might stand long. But founded on dust, it must quickly sink with its weight. Man is maintained out of the earth. Some have a greater heap of dust to stand upon than others, but still the earth supports us, and will swallow us up.

The pillars of the house are ready to give way very quickly. The strong men, the legs, bow themselves. Eccles. xii. 3. A day's sickness or two will make them not able to bear up the weight of the house. So the man must lie because he cannot stand. The keepers of the house are but weak. A little thing will set them a trembling.

3. It is a house that is daily in danger. Though a house were very weak, yet if nothing were to touch it, it might stand a long time. But our house is in danger daily and hourly. It is in danger from without. There are storms to blow it down, and a very small blast will sometimes do it. Though we walk not among swords, daggers, and bullets, yet a stumble in the highway may do it; as small a thing as a pear, yea a stone in fruit, has laid the house on the ground. It is in danger also from within. There are disorders to undermine the house. There are the seeds of a thousand deaths in our mortal bodies; which sometimes quickly, sometimes leisurely undermine the house, and make it fall down about our ears ere ever we are aware. The seeds of diseases, when we know not, are digging like moles under the mud walls, and soon destroy the house.

Moreover it is a dark house in which often the danger is never seen till it be past remedy. How many dangers come to the house from without which are never seen from the windows, nor perceived by the eyes till they arrive. But we cannot see what is doing within the house, the dissolution thereof may be going on apace.

II. But it may not be improper to take notice of some of the peculiarities of this house.

1. It is a curious house of brittle materials. "My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." The body of man is a stupendous piece of workmanship, of admirable curiosity. "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The very outworks of the house are admirable. Are there any so dull as not to observe the wisdom of God in that beauty and majesty that are in the face of man, beyond that of other creatures, in the faculty of speech, and in the admirable diversity of features and voices. How God has put the eyes and the ears in the head as in their watch tower; that they may the better serve for seeing and hearing. How the eyes are made rolling, that in a moment they can turn up or down, to one side or to another; covered with lids that we can shut or open as need requires. The ears always open, the tongue shut in with double leaved gates. Two arms to defend ourselves. These are the guardians of the house. Hands distinguished into so many fingers, for the more exquisite kinds of work. Nay, there is not a hair, nor nail in the body, but has its use. The hair on the eye lids to defend the eyes; the nails on our fingers are necessary for the more dexterous handling of any thing. What then must be the curiosity within. Galen admired the wisdom of the Creator in the thigh of a gnat. How much more is this wisdom, to be admired in the stucture of the human body, in which there is nothing lacking, nothing superfluous.

But now the more curious, the more easily marred. The greatest beauty is soonest tarnished. The finer the earthen vessel is, it is the more easily broken. So we are exposed to the greatest danger by a small touch.

2. It is a house that needs reparation daily. A good, well built house will need nothing for many years. Your meanest houses once right, need nothing for a year. But this earthly house needs reparation daily. It is reckoned by some that as much matter goes out of our bodies by insensible perspiration, as by the other natural evacuations. Thus a large proportion of our nourishment, perhaps five eights, goes out by the pores. Thus our bodies are in a continual flux, wasting like the oil of a lamp; so that in this sense we are dying daily. Hence eating and drinking are necessary, the house must be patched up with more mud daily. And some are so taken up with repairing the body, that all the day they do nothing else.

Uses from this Doctrine.

1. Prize your souls above your bodies, as you do the inhabitant above the house. O what madness is it in the hearts of men, who care for the body neglecting the soul. Will you be still looking after the house, and never minding the never dying inhabitant the soul? shall the soul be ruined, starved, and perish, while all the care is about the body.

2. Make not your body a war house against heaven. It is far too weak for that purpose. True, but many do it. While health and strength last, they securely fight against God, trample on his law, despise his Son, little minding how God may block them up in their house by disease, or pull down their house by death.

3. Be tender in the house. Though it is an earthly house it hath a heavenly inhabitant. Take care of the house for the sake of the soul. Such is the perverseness of man's nature, that many use their bodies worse than they do their beasts. Some will see well to their beasts that cannot bestow meat convenient on their own bodies; and work their bodies at a rate at which they would be sorry to work their beasts. The drunkard and the glutton treat their horses better than they treat their own bodies. They take care of their horses, but ruin their own bodies.

4. Never ruin the inhabitant for the house. Would you not think him mad that would strip himself naked to cover his house. Better surely that the house be uncovered than that the inhabitant be left naked. Yes, but this madness has seized the generality of the world. They will pamper their bodies while they will be cruel as the Ostrich to their souls. They will be all anxiety about food and raiment, who will take no more care about their souls than if they were but salt to keep their bodies from putrefaction. They will load their consciences with mountains of guilt, if by that means they can get a little more thick clay to the earthly house.

5. Beware of defiling the house, seeing it has such a noble lodger. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Sin defiles the body. When the members of the body, which should be instruments of righteousness, are made instruments of sin; a covetous or wanton eye, a disorderly tongue, given to lying or swearing: hands and feet employed in mischief, make the body a foul lodging for the soul. And these will be stains, which, without repentance, will cleave to the body in the grave and at the resurrection.

6. Take heed to the door of the house. Set a watch, O Lord, be-

fore my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Let the door be duly shut and discreetly opened. Open your mouth with wisdom. When the door stands always open the dweller is in danger; and in the multitude of words there wanteth not folly. They can hardly speak well that speak much. Words, few, select, and seasoned with grace and sobriety are best both for soul and body. But the mouths of many are the dung-gate standing always open, that the devil may drive out at it the filth of the heart in lies, slanders, oaths, and impure language. But surely they will be silent in the grave.

7. Take heed to the windows of the house. The soul got its death wound at first by the window. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." And Satan will still attack where he made the first breach. Therefore Job put the guard of a covenant upon them. I made, says he, a covenant with mine eyes. They are two little rolling members which a splinter of wood may close up altogether; but they are gates of destruction broad enough.

6. Dispatch your business with the stranger that is in the house, always going out and in, that you be not surprised with his departure, before you have done your business with him. I mean your breath. It is going continually out and in, to and from the door of your lips, and you know not what will be the last breath. But when once gone, no more business can be done for time or eternity. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Lastly, Provide in time for a better house. You must depart from this. Inquire, then, to what place you are going, for here you cannot stay long. And if you have not your lodging taken up in heaven, you will get a dungeon house for eternity, where the light is as darkness. Awake then, O sluggard, up and be doing. Mind the days of eternity for they shall be many.

Motives.—1. This house will tumble down about your ears, whatever you do to hold it up. Fix one foot then, before the other be loosed, lest you get such a fall as you will never rise again. This body is but a lodging house, it cannot stand very long. Look for another.

2. There are but two places, heaven and hell, in one of which you must dwell for ever. In heaven there are many mansions of glory, and yet there is room for you. In hell every person will get their own place of torment and misery unspeakable. The saints departed, are gone home to their mansions; the wicked departed, are gone to their place. We are upon the road. What way will you turn your

face? Take what way you please, you will soon be at the end of it.

3. You have no security of your house, you know not how soon you may be turned out of doors. Now for a house to the body, you will not readily want it; as much room as will serve you, you will certainly get in the grave, the house appointed for all living. That will be the body's long home. But where think you will be your eternal home? When the soul is turned out at death, to what place will it next go? I hope to heaven. Then what evidence have you from *this Bible* for that hope? I do not know. How comes that? Are you busy seeking evidences, but cannot come to light? May the Lord clear up your darkness! But I fear many know nothing about this work. You are careless whether you land in heaven or hell. You know not but you may be in hell the next moment. The brittle thread of life is not to be depended upon; therefore "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Doctrine II. Man's body is a Tabernacle, or Tent for his soul. Paul was a tent-maker, and he takes a lesson of his frailty from what was among his hands, teaching us to do the same. It is so called,

1. Because it is easily taken down. Whatever force may be necessary to pull down a house, it is easy to pull down a tent. There needs no more but to loose the cords, and pull out the pins, and the tent lies along. So easily is man's body taken down by death. Having its foundation in the dust, *it is crushed before the moth.* A very little thing indeed may rob man of his mortal life.

2. A Tent is a moveable house that stands not always in one place, but is carried from place to place. So while we are in the body, we are not come to the place of our rest, or settled habitation. Heaven ever moves, yet is it the place of our rest, earth ever stands still, yet it is not a place of rest. While we are in the body, our case is changeable, but when once out of it, is unalterable for ever, whether in happiness or misery.

3. Tents, though mean without, may be precious within. However mean outwardly the tabernacle of the body be, it has a precious soul within, of more worth than ten thousand worlds. It is a rich tent in that respect, because of the precious soul, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, capable of enjoying God for ever.

4. Our state in the world in this body is like that of those who dwell in tents. Our body is as the shepherd's tent. Our souls are those we have to feed while we are in the body. And the shepherd's tent must not stand long in one place, but must soon be

removed. So must our bodies into the grave. The body is a soldier's tent. We are set down in the world, to fight the good fight of faith, and we must lay our account with hardships and of being conquerors, otherwise we will be surprized in our tents, and ruined. It is a pilgrim's tent. We are in our way to another world; and the lodging the soul has in the body, is but a lodging as in a tent by the way.

Uses of this Doctrine.

1. We need not wonder then at sudden death. It has often been seen that a tent has fallen down when not a hand touched it. It is a weak thing, but man's body is as weak before the king of terrors, that can dispatch it in a moment.

2. Let us lay our accounts with hardships while we are in the body. They that dwell in tents do not expect the ease and conveniencies which a house affords. And why should we wonder at the troubles with which we meet while in the body. The ease is coming, if we come to the building of God. But for a tent to be beaten black with wind and weather, nothing more common.

3. Let us confess we are pilgrims and strangers on earth, and live like those who are quickly to remove. Let us not expect to fix our dwelling here but prepare for our removal. We come into the world to go out again; and within a little our tent shall be removed and our place know us no more.

Lastly, Let us be preparing for a more excellent and abiding mansion. There is a city that is continuing, let us seek after it. A house of God's building, in which there are many mansions, let us be careful to secure our title to it. There is a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us run, as we may obtain that noble prize.

Doctrine III. The earthly house of the tabernacle of our body will be dissolved by death. That is what we look for, and we are provided for it if we have a building with God.

I. Here I shall shew in what respects death is a dissolution.

II. That this body shall be dissolved. I am then

I. To shew in what respects death is a dissolution.

1. Death dissolves the union betwixt soul and body. When it comes, the silver cord that unites the soul and body together is loosed. Eccl. xii. 6. No wonder it dissolve relations betwixt persons, when it dissolves that union. The man is made up of two parts, a soul and a body, united by an invisible bond; death looses the knot, and then the parts fall asunder. The earthly part goes to the earth, and the spiritual part to God that gave it, to be sent to its eternal home.

2. Death dissolves the body itself. It consists of many parts curiously set together by the Creator, but then the beautiful frame is dashed in pieces and is resolved into its primitive dust. The tabernacle then is taken down, the earthly house is demolished, and lies in rubbish till the resurrection.

Death dissolves the vital flame that kept the body in life. It quenches that flame and puts out that candle. Sometimes it dissolves it suddenly as a burning candle when it is blown out, sometimes it works it out by degrees, like a candle burnt to the socket, which is dissolved at length and vanisheth away.

Death dissolves the communion betwixt the parts of the body. The flame being extinguished, the communication betwixt the parts which ceased not for many years, is then broken up. No more blood flows from the heart, no more flows to it from the other parts, so the last pulse beats. No more spirits from the brain. Then all falls down together. Then the body grows cold, and stiff, and pale. The eyes see no more, and the ears hear no more.

Death dissolves the joints and bands with which the body was united. While it feeds on the carcase in the grave, it looses the head from the body and the skull lies by itself. Then the strongest arms fall from the shoulder blade; and then the joints of the thighs are loosed, and every bone lies by itself. Finally, the most minute particles of the body are separated. How soon are the flashes of flesh so dissolved and separated, that they are no more visible to the eye of him that looks into the grave, they cannot be discerned from common dust. And though the bones last longer, yet their solidity is not proof against the power of death, but they also moulder into dust at length. Let us now,

II. Shew that this body shall be dissolved.

1. There is an unalterable statute of death under which men are concluded. "It is appointed unto men once to die." There is no peradventure in it but *we must needs die.* Though some will not fear death, every man must see it. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Death is a champion, with whom all must grapple. An inexorable messenger, who cannot be diverted from executing his orders, by the power of the mighty.

2. Daily observation tells us we must die. "For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others." There is room enough for us, notwithstanding all the multitudes that were on earth before us. It is long since death began to transport men into another world. It is daily carrying away vast numbers, and none hear the grave say

it is enough. The world is like a great fair, some entering, others going away. Men, like travellers, enter at one port and go out by another.

3. All men consist of perishing materials. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The strongest are but brittle earthen vessels. The soul is but meanly housed while in this body. A small spark falling on the train of these perishing principles will blow up the house. There is something more astonishing in our life than in our death. Diseases are death's harbingers.

4. We have sinful souls, therefore dying bodies. The wicked must die by virtue of the threatening. "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The godly also must die, that as death entered by sin, so sin may go out by death. The leprosy is in the wall of the house, therefore it must be pulled down.

Finally, we are hasting to a dissolution. "Man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not. Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. They are passed as the swift ships, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey."

All the improvement I shall make of this, is to exhort you to prepare for your dissolution.

Motives—1. Your eternal state will be according to the state in which you die. Heaven and hell depend upon it. As to you, death will open the door of the one or the other. As the tree falls so it must lie.

2. Consider what it will be to go into another world, a world of spirits, with which we have very little acquaintance. How terrible is intercourse with spirits now to poor mortals. Acquaint thyself then, with the Lord of that other world.

3. It is but a short time which we have to prepare for death. Now or never. The work is great—and the time allowed for it is short.

4. Much of our short time is already past. None can say they have as much to come. Our life here is but a short preface to a long eternity.

5. The time we have is flying away. Time past has taken an eternal farewell. There is no rekindling of the candle that is burnt to ashes. The stream of time is the most rapid current.

Lastly, If once death carry us away there is no coming back to mend matters. "If a man die, shall he live again?" If death were a thing upon which we could be allowed to try our hand, it would not be so dangerous. But it is only once to die, right or wrong. "We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

By this building and house, we are to understand the glorified state of the saints after this life, that is, their heavenly house of God's own making not by the hands of men, but by the fingers of God.

Doctrine. When the tabernacle of the saint's body is dissolved by death, they have a house of glory in heaven ready for them. Man when he is dead, is not done; though the body dies, the soul doth not. Death is but a departure or change, to some it is a miserable, to others a happy change. So it is to the saints. Their souls depart from the earthly house, to a house of glory. I design not to handle at large this great subject, but only to glean a few things to shew what sort of a house the glory of heaven is.

1. It is a dwelling house, not an house in which to lodge, but to dwell and abide. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" The body is but a tabernacle, in which the believing soul lodges for a little time, like a shepherd, a soldier, or a pilgrim in his tent. But at death the soul comes home to the house in which it shall abide for ever, and go no more out. The believer's dwelling house is in heaven.

2. It is a royal house, a palace. "They shall enter into the king's palace." Christ calls his saints to a kingdom, and their house is suitable to their dignity. It is the house of the kingdom, in which the great King keeps his court, in which he hath placed his throne, and displays his glory in a peculiar manner, beyond what mortals can conceive. No beggar's cottage is so far inferior to the best palace, as it is to the house to which the gracious soul goes at death, though it departs from the poorest cottage.

3. It is a holy house, a temple. "He that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." The Jews reckon four or five things that were wanting in the second temple. In this nothing shall be wanting. In it they shall have the cloud of glory in the divine presence—Christ, the ark in which the fiery law is for ever hid—the mercy seat, from which nothing breathes but eternal peace—the Cherubim in the society of angels!—the golden candlestick with its seven lamps; "for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." The altar of incense, in the everlasting intercession of Christ,—and the table of shew bread, in the perpetual feast of the enjoyment of God.

If you ask where this house stands? I answer for the country, it is in a better country, *even a heavenly one.* Their house is in a better country than the best of this world. It is in the heavenly Canaan, Immanuel's land, in which nothing is wanting to complete

the happiness of the inhabitants. This is the happy country, blessed with a perpetual spring, which yieldeth all things for necessity, conveniency, and delight. There men eat angel's food, "even the hidden manna." They are fed to the full with the product of the land falling into their mouths. That land enjoys an everlasting day, "for there shall be no night there." An eternal sunshine beautifies it. No cold, no scorching heat.—No clouds, yet no land of drought. It is the country from which Christ came, to which he hath returned, and in which he will for ever dwell.—As for the city, this house stands "in that great city, the holy Jerusalem." In that city the inhabitants tread on gold, the very thing on which the men of this world set their hearts; "for the street of the city is of pure gold as it were transparent glass." A city this, which shall stand and flourish when all the cities below are in ashes. A city that never changeth its inhabitants. Life and immortality reign in it. Blessed with perfect peace, nothing from any quarter can ever annoy it. In it there can be no want of provision, no discord.

If you ask concerning the pleasantness of the situation of this house? I answer it is a palace, and paradise is the palace garden. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," said our Lord to the dying thief. Heaven is a paradise for pleasure and delight. Eden was the most pleasant spot of the uncorrupted earth, and paradise was the most pleasant spot of Eden. But what is earth in comparison of heaven. The glorified saints are advanced to the heavenly paradise where they will be satisfied with those purest and sweetest pleasures which Immanuel's land affords, and swim in an ocean of delights for ever. There they shall enjoy every thing in abundance, "On either side of the river stands the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month." No flaming sword there to keep them from it.

If you ask concerning the inhabitants of this house? I answer, there dwell "the general assembly of the church of the first born." The whole congregation of spotless saints, there dwell also the holy angels. There is Christ the Lamb. There shall they be ever with the Lord.

4. It is a Father's house. What a kindly word! It is Christ's Father's house, and therefore no strange house to the gracious soul. "In my Father's house," says he, "are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you." The Father loveth the Son, and the Son hath loved the gracious soul to die for it. Why should the saints then be afraid of their welcome at that house which is their Father's. It is our Father's house. For his Father is our Father. "I ascend, said he, unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your

God." Is not the believing soul espoused to the Son of God? Is not the gracious person begotten of God and adopted of God. So he is their Father and that makes heaven home to them.

5. It is a spacious house. This clay body is a narrow house, where the soul is caged up for a time. But in that house there will be room enough for the soul to expatiate, for it hath *many mansions*. For as broad as the earth is, many a saint has not a foot of ground in it which he can call his own; yea often there is not room for them at all to remain upon it; but they will all have the most ample accommodation in Immanuel's land.

6. It is a most convenient house. In it no conveniency will be wanting. There are many mansions in it, and every saint shall find his own mansion prepared and furnished with every conveniency for him. They will find every thing that can be desired.

O believer, art thou in poverty and straits? There is an incorruptible treasure in that house. Is thine honour in the dust? A crown for thy head and a sceptre for thy hand await thee there. Art thou shut up in solitude? There you shall enjoy eternal converse with God, the angels, and the saints. Is your life full of bitterness? You will find rivers of pleasures there. Are you weak and sickly? There grows the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Are you groaning under the tyranny of sin? There you shall walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Are defiled garments making you hang down your heads? You shall there shine in spotless robes of holiness. Is fighting hard work? In that house ye shall for ever triumph. Are you weary and almost fainting under the labours of the Christian life? There you shall have perpetual rest. Is your communion with God here frequently interrupted? There will be no interruptions there. Are you in darkness? There is no night there. Are you in fear of death? There you shall enjoy eternal life.

7. It is a safe house. The gates "are not shut at all by day," for there is no danger there. Adam in the earthly paradise was not out of danger. The serpent got accession to it. But no unclean thing can enter there. None in the house are placed on the watch. The sentinels are all recalled from their ports, and walk at large without fear of being annoyed, or of falling upon any forbidden fruit.

8. It is a glorious house. The visible heavens, in which the sun, that globe of light, is placed, and that are bespangled with stars, are but the porch of the seat of the blessed. How glorious then must that house be, whose avenues and entries are so splendid and rich. We know very little of this house. But it must needs be a very glorious house. For it is the house in which the king's son is

to dwell with the bride, the Lamb's wife, for ever. Solomon built a glorious house for Pharaoh's daughter. This is of the true Solomon's building for his elect, whom he loved before the world was.

Besides it must be a glorious house, for it was purchased at a vast expence, even the blood of the Son of God, an expence which eternity will be too short to reckon. He was wise who paid the price, just who received it, and also a Father who would not put his Son to needless cost. What an unspeakably glorious purchase must the house then be?

The indispensable necessity for washing and purifying, to fit persons for dwelling in the house, shews it to be glorious. There will be spots and uncleanness in the fairest palace on earth; but "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." Those who are to be inhabitants, must first be washed in the laver of regeneration; every day they must wash their feet from their daily infirmities; and at death they must be washed every whit clean; and all in the clean water of Christ's blood and Spirit.

Lastly, It is an everlasting house. It is eternal in the heavens. This lodging house of the body goes quickly to the dust; the lower house of this earth will go up in purple flames; but that house in the heavens will endure for ever.

For Improvement.

1. Behold and admire the happiness of the saints. Though they knew not where to lay their heads on earth, yet if this tabernacle were dissolved they have a glorious house ready for them. Others may know of a house under ground, a grave, a vault for the body. But the saints have a house above the earth, yea above the clouds, a happy and glorious receptacle for the soul.

2. Is it not surprising that the saints should be alarmed at death, the way to their own house? What the worse was Mordecai that it was Haman that brought him the king's horse, and led his bridle through the street of the city. A child of God is not ill situated in the very valley of the shadow of death, for his Lord is with him. When persons are near their own house, though they have a few rugged steps and the night be dark and stormy, yet they are not easily discouraged, because they know they will soon be home. Alas for our carnality and want of faith.

Lastly, Seek a house now, into which you may be received when your earthly house is dissolved. There is such a house, and you may have it. O set to work now for this house. It is a house of

which you may obtain a lease, not for the term of life, for there is no dying there, but an everlasting lease, for this house changes no tenants. It is a house which you will get rent free, except the singing of glory, glory and praise to God the builder and owner, and to the Lamb, the purchaser of the house.

SERMON IV.

2 CORINTHIANS. v. 1.

For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

THERE are three ways by which we may know a thing, first by sense, thus we know the fire to be hot, and ice to be cold. Secondly, by rational evidence, thus when we see a house, we know that there has been a builder; and a beautiful world, we know that there is a God, because none of them could make themselves. Thirdly, by the testimony of others, by human testimony, as by history we know what was done before we were in the world; and by divine testimony, or revelation, we know the truths of the gospel. The first of these cannot be pretended in the present case, for heaven and the glory to come fall not now under our bodily senses. As for the inward spiritual sense and feeling of what is heavenly it falls in with rational evidence. As for the third, that of testimony, there can no human testimony make us know this. As for divine testimony in the scripture, it comes not so low as to the case of particular persons by name, saying to such and such a saint heaven is thine. As to extraordinary revelation, Paul speaks here of other believers as well as himself, of whom we have no ground to think they had extraordinary revelation. As to the ordinary testimony of the Spirit, it proceeds upon rational evidence. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God." Therefore I conclude this knowledge in the text, is upon rational evidence, from the marks and signs of a gracious state of which the believer may be conscious, being founded on the word of God.

Doctrine. They who look for heaven when they die, should have rational evidence of their title to it, while they live.

There is great need of this doctrine, for presumption in the wicked, and slothfulness in the saints, make hopes of heaven whereof men can give no rational account, very plentiful. Do you

hope, do you know that heaven will be your landing place? Then I would ask you, how do you know this, upon what grounds? You have not been wrapt up to the third heavens, and read your title there. You will not pretend, I hope, extraordinary revelation sent down to you. Beware of that, "we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." But whatever you may pretend that way, if your title cannot be made good by the word, it is but a delusion. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Well then, what rational evidence according to the scripture, have you for it? How can you make good your title by the word, which contains the laws of the kingdom? If you cannot do that, and yet hope and think you know it, it seems you have dreamed it. And take heed, lest it be no more but a dream. Therefore they who look for heaven when they die, should have rational evidence of their title to it while they live. Here I shall,

I. Shew of what we should have rational scriptural evidences.

II. What it is to have rational evidences for heaven.

III. I will shew that the saints may have such evidences.

IV. I will give the reasons of the doctrine. I am according to this plan,

1. To shew of what we should have rational scriptural evidences. What is it we should know.

The text tells us, it is that we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. If we prepare aright for eternity, we will not be content with less than this. Sure I am we will not be content with less in a matter of far inferior importance. The term of Whitsunday is drawing near, and among those of us that have tack, there will be riding and running till they know, that if the term were come, they have a house and land to remain upon, or another place to which they can go. And why less diligence in this affair? The apostle does not say, *perhaps* we will get a building—no, eternity is too great a matter to venture upon a perhaps, or a may be, if it be within the compass of our power to carry it farther. Nay, what is more, he says not, that we know we will have it, we will get it, *but we have it already*. Eternity is too great a matter to be uncertain about for the shortest time.

Here is a mystery, the saints have the house of glory already; though they be still on earth, and have not an inch of ground which they can call their own. I will unriddle this to you in two things. 1. The saints have heaven in right and title, as the young heir has the land, into possession of which he is not yet entered. 2. They have the hold of heaven already, like a man that has had some pre-

cious thing fallen into a well, and searching for it with an instrument, whenever he finds the thing upon it, he cries out with joy, I have it, I have it.

I. The saints have heaven in right and title.

1. God from eternity designed heaven for them, and them for heaven, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ? The lines have fallen in pleasant places for them, even in the pleasant land. The lot of electing love hath given them their inheritance there. Eternal love puts its everlasting arms underneath them, and that lifts them up in time from the pit, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." This is a sure foundation of right. It cannot be overturned, for it is of God's own laying, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." And when they are solemnly admitted into their house, the Judge will recognize this title of theirs, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." For God does with the heavenly, as he did with the earthly Canaan. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

2. Christ has purchased it for them. "God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. The first Adam forfeited the house of glory for himself and all his posterity, the fallen angels forfeited their part too, and now they have no right to it. But O happy saints, they had a near kinsman, that was mighty, and he redeemed the mortgaged inheritance. Job xix. 25—27. The house of heaven was a mighty purchase indeed! The united stock of men and angels would no more have redeemed it, and fixed our title to it, than a barley corn would have redeemed an estate. But there is infinite value in the precious blood of the Son of God.

3. God is theirs and Christ is theirs. The saints' *maker is their husband.* And heaven of course is their dowry house. A house suitable to the quality of their husband. "God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath provided for them a city." They are by regeneration and adoption, sons of the house, therefore heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And now may each of them say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And therefore all is theirs. The house and all its pertinents. Yea "all things are theirs and they are Christ's." If the Lord of the house be their

husband, who can question their right to the house. Is not the body more than meat, and the builder, and purchaser, and owner, more than the house.

4. Christ has taken possession of heaven in their name. "Whether the forerunner is for us entered even Jesus." He is keeping their room for them till they come. I go, said he, to prepare a place for you. Thus their title is fixed, their place is secured for them. At death they will enter into actual possession of what they have already got infeftment in Christ their head. Christ was a public person, representing all the heirs of glory. In their name and stead, he obeyed, died, rose again, ascended, and sat down in glory. So that the apostle makes no doubt to tell us, that believers on earth "are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Lastly, God has promised it to them. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." This is their charter for heaven registered in the Bible; to which the King has appended his broad seal, the holy sacraments, a red bloody seal, with this inscription, *Remember me.* Though he be no debtor to them, he is debtor to his own faithfulness. Though they could never purchase the house, yet our Lord could dispone it to them freely, being his own purchase. "Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And to make sure work, the promise is made to Christ. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." And O the comfort of this dispensation! Unbelief will not stand to blaspheme and say, will God ever make out the promise to thee? But will it dare question if God will make good his promise to his own Son, especially when the thing promised was purchased with his own blood.

II. The saints have the hold of heaven already.

1. They have it in the covenant. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire." Now if all the believers' salvation and desire be in it, surely heaven is in it; for how low soever the desire of others may be, the desire of the saints is no less. Hast thou heard and believed, that thou hadst lost heaven and exposed thyself to hell by sin, and thou wast going about mourning without the sun for the loss, and seeking to get it repaired, and thou hearest of the covenant and laid hold upon it for time and eternity; then know thou, that that moment heaven was found, and thou mightest have cried out, I have it, I have it. The covenant is the chariot in which Christ carries his saints to glory; and as we use to say of people, that they are gone to such a place, when the coach in which

they are has set off for it: so we may say the believer is gone to heaven, for the chariot of the covenant will not stop by the way, so that they who are in it shall arrive there as surely as if they were there already. Then if you would have the house, come into the covenant.—Close with Christ. Deliberately make up the match between him and your souls, in the way of the marriage covenant. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me."

You must also break your covenant with your lust.—Many pretend to covenant with Christ, but it plainly appears that they are in a chariot which the devil drives. "That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive at his will." No wonder then such persons make haste after another God. We must then part with our lusts, or give up pretences to the covenant, and as to heaven.

2. They have it in faith. They have the hold of it by believing. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The possession by faith is a sure possession. When faith lays hold upon and embraces Christ, it enfolds heaven also in its arms, for *he is eternal life.* He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. The whole of heaven and glory is in Christ, virtually, they who have him cannot fail of all that is in heaven. The best part of heaven is in Christ formally, for the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him. Christ is the fairest flower in the heavenly country, the most precious jewel of all the treasures of the upper house. If one had the sun to be ever with them, they would have a lasting day, and would need neither moon nor star light. So the saints having Christ, have everlasting light. Their heaven is begun, and if once there were no more clouds to intercept the light of that sun, which now ever shines above their horizon, then they will have heaven in its largest extent.

Faith also embraceth the promise, in which heaven is wrapt up. It is said of the Patriarchs, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." *Embraced them,* that is, the things promised. An allusion to mariners who having been long at sea, joyfully salute the land, and as it were embrace it when they first see it. God's word is as good security as possession. And as men may be possessed of land, which they never saw, by infeftment and seisin, so may the believer be of the land that is afar off by embracing the promise of it.

3. They have it in hope well grounded, even hope on the word. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul; both sure and

stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." Therefore salvation is attributed to hope. "For we are saved by hope." By faith the Christian fights and overcomes, and by hope he gathers the spoil. Ask those who have been plunged into despair, and they will tell you, that they have been in hell while on earth. Despair brings up hell into the soul, and true hope brings down heaven into it. Hope is enjoyment antedated, and excites the same joy, delight, and complacency, that enjoyment doth; as you may see in the hope of worldly things. But with this difference, that earthly things are commonly sweeter in expectation than enjoyment, but spiritual things quite otherwise.

Lastly, They have it in the first fruits of it. "We have the first fruits of the Spirit." And these are the earnest of our inheritance." Thus they are entered on possession already. They have got a cluster of the first ripe grapes of the heavenly Canaan. They have "the earnest of the Spirit." Now the earnest is both a part of the price, and a pledge of the whole. What is grace but glory in the bud; or glory but grace come to perfection. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." We now proceed,

II. To shew what it is to have rational evidence of heaven. If a man pretend a right to houses or lands, and there be any to question his right, he looks out his evidences, brings forth his papers, and witnesses, to evince that that house or land is his, which will be sustained, so far as they are agreeable to the laws of the land, where the house or land is situated. Now, brethren, we all pretend to the house of heaven, to Canaan's land. It is unreasonable and absurd to pretend to possession, if we do not pretend to a right of possession, for there can be no violent possessors of heaven. Now if you pretend a right to heaven, it is highly reasonable you have something to evidence that right. Now your right is or will be questioned.

1. Ministers in the name of the Lord question your right. They have reason to do it, because there are so many who deceive themselves in this matter, and because deception in it is an eternal loss. You are told that there is a generation pure in their own eyes, yet not cleansed from their iniquities—we read of foolish virgins who perished by trusting to an empty profession of religion, and therefore we call you to compear in the court of your own conscience to clear up this matter. "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." "Wherefore

the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." And upon that occasion, you ought to produce some rational evidence; "and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

2. Does not your own conscience sometimes question your right? Do not doubts and fears sometimes at least arise in your minds, like a pain in the side? If they do not now it is very strange, you must be very fast asleep. But conscience will do it afterwards, when it comes to be enlightened, and it may be when there is no remedy. You should have something provided for such a time.

3. Satan will question your right when he sees his opportunity. If thou be a child of God, Satan, when he has thee at an advantage, will assuredly question your right. He questioned Christ's sonship. "If thou be the Son of God." And he will do his utmost to raise his black band of doubts and fears to attack thee; and how wilt thou fight against them but by the sword of the Spirit, rational scriptural evidences.

If thou be a deceiver of thyself, it is like Satan will not much trouble thee that way, till the time come that thou canst hardly expect to get a right, and then thou mayest come to know to the torment of thy soul, that thou hast none and never had.

Lastly, Our right to heaven will be sifted before the tribunal of God, and no pretences will do there that cannot be made good by the word which contains the laws of the kingdom. Fraudulent pretenders to heaven there may be now, but no fraudulent possessors will be there. And if thy right then be judged null, there is no mending the matter through eternity. Who then would venture such a business on such a final decision, without first canvassing their right in their own minds.

Now, a right to heaven is made out to a man that has it by evidences. And evidence for heaven is the gracious work of the Spirit of God upon a person felt or discerned by him that has it, to be a gracious work. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? For clearing of this,

1. As the right to heaven is given to every soul upon the account of Christ's purchase, so soon as they are in Christ by faith; so the word of God, the laws of the kingdom of heaven, secure it to such by promise.—"There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

2. Every soul in Christ has a gracious work wrought on it by the Spirit of Christ. Heaven is begun in them by the gracious change by which they are fitted for it. Their faith is not idle, but *purifieth*

the heart, and establisheth the law. The Spirit dwelling in them, works in them gracious qualifications peculiar to the heirs of glory. "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritence of the saints in light."

3. Though these qualifications be wrought in a man, yet if he do not discern them, they are not evidences, and he has not the comfort of them. He is in the dark, he knows not whither he is going; "he walketh in darkness, and hath no light." And because so many deceive themselves in this weighty matter it is a frightful case.

Lastly, Evidence for heaven, then, is the gracious work of the Spirit, to which the promise of heaven is annexed, and discovered to be in the soul particularly that has it. So that here two things concur to make it up.

1. Light into the Lord's promise and word in the Bible, so that the soul believeth and is persuaded, that such and such have a right to heaven and shall have it. For example, those that are truly poor in spirit, Matt. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Those that have a supreme transcendant love to the Lord above all. Proverbs viii. 17. "I love them that love me." Those that have an universal love to the law. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." These are some of the laws of the kingdom, by which men's right to it is determined. Now if the word be not believed, there can be no evidence, for in that case there is no foundation for evidence.

2. Light into the Lord's work on the heart and life, by which a man sees in himself those things to which the promise of heaven is annexed. For example, that he is poor in spirit, loves the Lord supremely and loves his law universally; and therefore concludes according to the word, that his is the kingdom of heaven. The Lord loves him and he shall not be ashamed. The man that hath this, hath evidence; and so can give a rational account of the hope that is in him.

This evidence is more or less clear according to the light that shines upon the Spirit's work in the heart. Grace has a light with itself, and he that believes, loves the Lord and loves his law, may be conscious of his own actions in these things, as well as in other cases. Thus the saints have the testimony of their own spirits. The Spirit of the Lord also shines upon his own work, and discovers it, sometimes with such a degree of light that the man's spirit is helped to perceive it clearly, yet all doubt is not removed. Sometimes he irradiates the soul with a light so clear, that they can no more doubt of it than of the sun's shining, when it is glaring in their eyes. "Thus the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Let us now,

III. Endeavour to shew that the saints may have such evidence.

1. A believer may know that he has relative grace, that he is justified, adopted, &c. Though he cannot go up to heaven, and at first hand read his name in the book of God's decrees; yet by opening the Book of the word, and the Book of his own soul, and comparing the two together, he may know that he is called and elected. We are "to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end." In this way a believer may know that he is a child of God, and that Christ loved him and died for him.

2. A believer may know that he hath inherent grace. He may know that he believes, as sure as that he breathes. "I know," says Paul, "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." He may know that he hath love to Christ, and can appeal to God's omniscience upon the matter. "Lord," said Peter to his Master, "thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And thus believing that such persons have a right to heaven, he may know he is the man. And being persuaded of the certainty of the perseverance of the saints, knowing that he has grace, and that so he shall never lose it, he may be persuaded, he shall go to that house, whenever his earthly tabernacle is dissolved.

3. Consider the office and work of the Spirit given to all the saints. He is given them for a teacher to lead them into all the truth, and particularly to discover the grace of God in them, by a heavenly light on his own work. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." He is given for a witness, to be a "joint witness with our own spirits that we are the sons of God," Rom. viii. 16. To be a seal, which properly is to ensure an evidence. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And as an earnest, which is both a part of the price and a pledge of the whole, "God hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

4. The operations and effects of faith in the soul clear this point. Such as boldness and confidence with God, which cannot be without some evidence of a relation to him as our Father. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God which necessarily requires rational evidence of that hope, Rom. v. 2. This is the more to be regarded, as it is sometimes *joy unspeakable*, 1 Peter i. 8. To such joy, plain, yea speaking evidences are absolutely necessary. It is a joy which none

can take from them, though they should take all that they have in the world. John xvi. 22. Surely in that case, they see that they have the treasure, of which no man, no devil can rob them. And all this makes them cheerfully endure sufferings, "knowing in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

Lastly, Many of the saints have had such evidence for heaven, Job xix. 25—27. David also could say, and I "will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." And says Paul, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." And not only scriptural saints, but others of an inferior rank, who have been capable to give an account of their hope, satisfying to their own tender consciences and also to others. It now remains,

IV. To give the reason of the doctrine.

1. It is the command of God. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." God calls every man to bring his state to the touchstone and to see what it is. "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your ownselves." He commands even his enemies to see their state and to lay aside their deluding hopes. And he has not only made heaven sure to his people, but he would have them to be assured of it, for their greater comfort.

2. Because God has shewn us the way, how we may come to a clearness and certainty as to our state. The scripture every where abounds with trying evidences, particularly the first epistle of John is written for that very end. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." How can we then quietly continue in the dark, not knowing how it is, and how it will be with us, when the Lord has compassed us about with so much spiritual light for that purpose. How can we pretend to tenderness, and yet slight a duty for which he hath so fully provided?

3. Because salvation is a matter so important, it is unaccountable stupidity not to be concerned for evidences. Who but a fool or a madman would slight the business of removing to another house on earth, as men do that of the house of heaven? Now, every person, masters and servants, must know what comes of them at the term; only we are not enquiring what comes of us at death, whether we shall go to the house above or the house below.

4. It is necessary for the honour of God, the good and edification of others, and that both in life and death. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every

one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." It is little that we glorify God in our lives, and alas! the most are in hazard of dying as they live. They live in hopes of heaven, of which they can give no good account and may even come to die in the same way. It is but an obscure death little to the honour of God, or the edification of others; when persons pass away without clear evidences, or struggles to recover brangled evidences.

Use of Exhortation.

To those who have never been at pains to get a right to heaven. Why should I bid them seek evidence for a thing, which they were never at pains to get. Alas as to many, whatever be their hopes for heaven, evidences of hell are written on their foreheads. Such as,

1. Hardness of heart and blindness of mind constant and habitual, which create in them a deep security in their soul ruining courses. A stone is fitted to go downward, and so are they for the pit. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

2. God's giving up with them, saying "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." Some have had conscience as God's deputy struggling long with them, but at length they have got their consciences seared. There is none now to peep, or mutter within their breast, to disturb their rest in sin. Saul was near being cut off, when he was cast off.

3. Profanity of life, which cannot fail to have a miserable end, as long as dogs and swine are debarred from heaven. Those that have nothing but the form of religion may go to hell, but none that want a form will ever see heaven.

4. Unfruitfulness under the means of grace. A total unfruitfulness, when neither heart nor life is made better, but the leprosy of sin continues spreading, what can be expected but destruction.

I would exhort you who have not yet made it your work to get a right to heaven, now to begin that work in earnest; by your closing with Christ offered in the gospel, taking him in all his offices, marrying the heir that the dowry house may be yours.

Motives. 1. While you have no right to heaven, you are heirs of wrath and hell. "You are children of wrath." And it is a fearful case to live bound over to the wrath of God. Such is your case while without Christ, and without a title to heaven. You are under the curse, and condemned already. "For he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

2. This is the great work of time to be securing your happiness for eternity. What should a malefactor do in the time of a reprieve, but be seeking a remission if it may be obtained. He that dwells in an old ruinous house should be looking out for another. Now you are like a man standing on a spot of ground encompassed with the sea, which the tide will soon cover. It is not time to sleep in such a situation; so time ere long will be swallowed up in eternity.

3. We have some hopes of heaven, because we are yet within the line of mercy. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but eternal disappointment will kill the heart and pierce the heart with ten thousand sorrows. Hell will be sad to them that know nothing of heaven, but much worse for them, who, by its flames, are awakened out of their pleasant dreams of heaven.

4. All of us have heaven in our offer. The marriage of the King's Son is offered to us and heaven with him, for our dowry house. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." To fall short of an offered heaven will be a double hell.

Lastly, It will not always be so. The day will come that the doors will be shut and once shut will never more be opened. When once time is gone, God will bar them so, that for the ages of eternity, there shall be access no more. Then shall that oath have its full effect, "Unto whom I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest."

There are several, I hope, who have been careful about securing a right to heaven; who have been labouring to lay hold on the Covenant and Christ in it. I exhort you to try what has been the issue of all your pains that way, to try your state, and make out your title for heaven by evidences.

I. I will urge this upon you with some motives.

II. I will point out the hindrances of evidences for heaven.

III. I shall give you some directions in order to your obtaining evidences for heaven. I am then,

I. To urge you with some motives; to try what has been the issue of all your pains to obtain a right to heaven.

1. This is a troublesome world. Every person has his cross for every day. And the design of each of these is to tell you, your rest is not here. It is hope that supports the soul, and this hope must be raised not upon the prospect of ease in this life, of which we may soon be disappointed, but upon evidences of a better life. "For if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And these hopes of a better life may last, though the clouds return after the rain.

2. Many deceive themselves in that matter, and will meet with an eternal disappointment, as the foolish virgins did, Matth. xxv. There are two things clear as the sun in this matter. First, that there are few comparatively that will be saved. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Christ's flock is *a little flock*. The second thing is, that the far greater part entertain hopes of heaven. There are very few that do not expect, that they shall be the persons that shall be saved. Hence it follows many will be deceived and disappointed.—There are two sorts of self-deceivers that much abound in the world. First, formal hypocrites unacquainted with regeneration and the life of faith, yet acquainted with the external duties of religion. These build their hopes on some things that look like grace and holiness in heart and life, but they do not examine them narrowly, by the touchstone of God's word, hence they are deceived by counterfeit instead of current coin. This is the more to be regarded, that there is no grace but a hypocrite may have the counterfeit of it. The second class are the ignorant and the profane, who also hope that all will be well in the end. These trouble not themselves to search for satisfaction as evidence of their interest in Christ, but please themselves with the hopes which they rear up upon the general offers of the gospel, the mercy of God, and the death of Christ; without any evidence of their being in the Covenant, or having had the virtue of the blood of Christ applied to them. While thus so many deceive themselves, it is a loud call to us to make out our evidences.

3. The consideration of the time in which we live should engage us to this. Though the Lord has done wonders for us, yet there are sure symptoms of the Lord's anger against us, as call aloud to us to seek evidences.

It is a time of divisions, and these appear to be still increasing. Now while there is such reeling and staggering, some saying this, some that the other is the way, let us to take special heed to be right in the main. While some are saying, I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos; let us put it to the trial till we be able, each for himself to say, I am of Christ. Division has a sad influence on practical godliness; for the corrupt heart is apt to lay much weight on what side the man takes in such a time, and a mighty stress is laid upon being found in good company, as each alleges for himself that he is. The controversies and disputes about these things are apt to wear out soul exercise. But let us remember, that into how many parts soever the world and the church be now divided, the time comes when there will be but two parties, those that are in, and those that are out of Christ. The regenerated and the unregenerated.

It is a time in which, though strokes are delayed, yet there is no such repentance and reformation as may give us ground to think, that the bitterness of death is past. But be it as it will, every one ought to lay his account with sufferings. None are saved but those who have as much faith and love to Chirst as will make him cleave to him, come what will. "If any man, saith Jesus, come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Now should a time of public calamity come, how comfortless is the condition of men without evidences for heaven.

4. Death is approaching. We must die, and it is horrible to think of looking the grim messenger in the face, without evidence of eternal life. We must then enter into an unalterable state for ever, and must we venture into it as by a leap in the dark, not knowing where we may land? Are heaven and hell such light things, that it is a matter indifferent to us, which of them be our portion? O consider that last moment that will for ever determine our state, when we shall be lying on a dying bed, either holy angels, or devils waiting on to carry us to our eternal abode.

5. We know not when this may be our lot, or how we may be brought to death. We may pass away in a moment in a surprising manner when we are not looking for it. We may die in such a case, that we may be incapable of doing any thing for eternity. Or the pain and tossing may be such, that it will be difficult to get a composed thought. Do now then in proper time, what you would then wish to have done.

Lastly, Evidences for heaven are excellent means for a holy life. Some say that assurance is hurtful to piety, and inclines men to looseness, but the contrary is evident from the word, which enforceth holiness from assurance. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The scripture expressly asserts the tendency of assurance to holiness. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." And experience testifies that those who had the clearest evidences have been the most holy of all the saints, as Abraham, David, Paul. And this distinguishes well grounded evidence of the Lord's love from delusion which can never sanctify the soul. But to come to particulars:

1. A man's having evidences for heaven, inflames the soul with love to the Lord. One flame begets another, so the love of God to the soul clearly discerned, will increase the soul's love to the Lord. "We love him because he first loved us." He sits in the warm sun-

shine who sits under evidences of the Lord's love, and this cannot fail to melt the heart. The soul will be filled with admiration of God's goodness and grace.

2. It humbles the soul. None are more vile in their own eyes, than those who are most highly lifted up in the manifestations of the Lord's love. Abraham is but dust and ashes, while God is speaking to him as a friend. When David's honours were conferred upon him, he exclaimed, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" In 2 Cor. xii. you will find Paul as high as he could be raised, ver. 4. *Caught up into paradise.* And yet as low as he could lay himself, *though*, says he, ver. 11. *I be nothing.* For always the nearer a soul comes to God, God appears the greater, and the creature the less.

3. It produces tenderness of heart and life, great care to please God in all things, and watchfulness against every sin that may disturb the soul's rest in God. The empty traveller walks at random, fearing nothing, because he has nothing to lose. But he that hath full pockets will look well to himself. The solid hope of heaven, makes the soul study to be heavenly, and the hope of the marriage day makes the spouse of Christ to prepare for it.

4. It gives strength against corruption. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall never fall." The heavenly light within the soul, cleared as to its eternal interest, dispels the darkness that strengthens the work of corruption, and fits a man for every duty of a holy life. Faith is the provider for all our other graces. It brings in oil to the lamp, and the more evidence faith hath, it can do its office the better. A doubting Christian will always be a weak Christian, even as the soldier who has little hopes of victory, will be readily faint-hearted.

5. Assurance is the best support under sufferings and afflictions, as the connection of the text shews. It is a storehouse of patience and contentment under the rod, for it shews them things will have a happy issue; and under the want of all things, it shews them, that they shall inherit all things. It makes a man despise the frowns of the world, and the threats of enemies. Why should they fear the falling of their tabernacle, who know that they have an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens? They need not fear death, when to them it is an inlet to eternal life.

6. It fills a man with contempt of the world. If one know that his treasure is in heaven, his heart will be there also. "God forbid," says the apostle, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me." If you gaze on the shining sun for a time,

you will scarcely discern the beauty of the earth for some time after. And he that can solace himself, in the contemplation of heaven as his, this will much sink the value of created things with him. It sets a man above the earth, so that it must needs appear a very little thing.

Finally, To sum up all in one word, it makes a man fit either to live or die. Alas! how often are even good people unfit for either? Unfit to live, because of the weakness of grace, in the midst of temptations and trials. Unfit to die, for want of evidence of grace.—Whereas the man that has solid evidence for heaven, he has what can bear him through trials, support him under temptations, and even in the hour of death. We now proceed,

II. To point out the hinderances of evidences for heaven. There are very few have a right to heaven, and those that have no right can have no evidence; yet there are far fewer that have evidences of that right, of which they can give any rational account. The causes of this are these,

1. The great hindrance is a loose and irregular life. For as troubled water will not reflect the image of the sun, as clear standing water will do, so an irregular walk, will not afford that evidence of grace which a strict holy life will do. "He that hath my commandments," saith Jesus, "and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." While violent temptations and passions disturb the soul, it is as the troubled sea, dark and muddy. The outbreakings of corruption are as the mists and fogs that darken the air.

2. Weakness of knowledge in matters of religion.—This has been very evident in some, who when they have once got their judgments informed from the Lord's word, they have then got their troubled consciences eased.

There are four things have a very bad influence here.

First, Some weak persons have a notion that assurance of an interest in Christ and clear discerning of grace in the heart, is an extraordinary thing, at least that it is a business of insuperable difficulty, that they never have courage to attempt it. But pray, will you consider that God calls all Christians to it, weak and strong. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." He has appointed ordinary means for it. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. How then can it be looked on as an extraordinary thing? And is it a business of insuperable difficulty to

a man that understands the nature of grace, to reflect upon and discern the motions of his own soul within him, and compare them with the word? Is it such a very hard business for a man's own spirit to discern itself and its own actings and motions? "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?

Secondly, Mistakes as to the nature of evidences for heaven. It is surprising to find the weakness of some, in other respects not ignorant, who being asked the grounds of their hope for heaven and evidences for eternal life, will tell you that they build on such scriptures as these, "Him that cometh unto me, I will by no means cast out," "Christ died to save sinners."—These, and such declarations as these, are a foundation for the direct act of faith; but still the question returns, How know you that you have come to Christ? or that Christ died for you? and the only answer to these questions must be brought from some parts of the saving change which the man finds to be wrought in him.

Ignorance of the nature of true grace in general is a third thing that hath bad effects here. If in a time in which much counterfeit money is in circulation, a person receives a purse of good money, who yet does not know money, and cannot discern betwixt real and counterfeit coin, that man cannot be easy. So how is it possible that a man can have solid evidence for heaven, who knows not how to distinguish between true grace and that which is counterfeit. It is a great defect in many, who in other respects are knowing, that in this matter they are at a loss. Perhaps they can tell you, that love to God, and a real desire after righteousness, are marks of grace, but their loss is they cannot circumstantiate that love and desire, so as to distinguish them from hypocritical love and desire.

The fourth thing is the razing of foundations still upon every new prevailing of iniquity, so that by this means some are still kept fluctuating and unsettled. For, say they, if it be so, why am I thus? But why do they think that grace will get so soon free of its ill neighbour. This is surely your weakness. *Iniquities prevail against you.* If you labour to watch, and upon your frequent failures flee anew to the blood of sprinkling, and look to Christ for his Spirit to subdue sin, and be more sensible of your own weakness, and your need of Christ and imputed righteousness, you may even draw evidence from this, "That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

3. Sloth and laziness are a great hinderance. Under their influence persons cannot be at the trouble to call the soul to an account. Alas! how sad is it that many who dare not knowingly neglect

other duties, live nevertheless in the habitual neglect of self-examination, and enquiring by scripture marks into the state of their souls. They do not make it their business to observe the way of God towards them, nor the way of their spirits towards God. They never set themselves to seek evidences for heaven, till God in his anger lets them be tossed with violent doubts and fears. And it is not to be expected that evidences for heaven, will just fall down into the bosom of indolent unobserving Christians.

4. Indistinctness in closing with Christ and accepting of the covenant. If a bargain be huddled up in a haste, no wonder the man be not very clear about it. The not making the work of believing more clear and distinct causes such confusion in the review of it, as also an unclearness and uncertainty in pleading the benefit of it. Therefore labour to be very distinct in the renunciation of idols, particularly that which is the idol of jealousy, in closing with Christ in all his offices, and for all the glorious ends for which the Father has given him to poor sinners, for sanctification particularly as well as justification.

Lastly, The violence of temptations. God for the trial of his own permits it, and then Satan tosseth them so as they can hardly find where to fasten their feet. They stand as it were in a quagmire and find hard work to dispute their sincerity against the tempter. As it is the great work of Satan to blow up graceless persons in their presumptuous hopes, so it is his grand design, to rob the gracious of their peace and the comfort of their grace. For this purpose he raiseth darkness about them, and then orders the poor soul to read its evidences. And he has carried his point far, when he gets the soul over to his own side to dispute itself out of Christ. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted."

Sometimes Satan gives the hopes of the saints a side stroke, inferring their naughtiness from the way of the Lord's dealing with them in afflictions. He gets them first possessed with jealousies of the Lord's love, and unkindly thoughts of an afflicting God, and then carries them forward to conclude that their stroke is not the stroke of the Lord's children, and therefore their spot is not the spot of his people. "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" In this case it is good to use the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in which it is very like you will find the like case in which the saints have been. And if you cannot find the parallel of your own case yourselves, you should take advice of others, who may be better acquainted with the Scriptures. But cases are like faces, though for

substance the same, yet possibly some circumstances may differ; and it is a needless rack to please Satan, on which persons put themselves when nothing will satisfy them, but the case of a scripture saint, exactly like their own in every circumstance. To dismount the devil's cannon mounted upon this ground, you need no more but to observe these scriptures, Eccles. xi. 1, 2. 1 Corinth. iv. 9. Psalm lxxi. 7. and lxxvii. 19.

But again, Satan sometimes gives their hopes a foundation stroke, overturning to their view the very foundations of their peace, in their first turning to God, and closing with Christ, persuading them all was naught, *because* the law work was not deep enough, and their repentance was not complete. Often have the saints themselves to blame for this. They lay much of the weight of their peace, upon the depth of their convictions and terrors, and the bitterness of their repentance. Whereas the weight of it is to lie entirely on the blood of Christ, for nothing else can shelter us from the wrath of God. "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. For he is our peace. And his blood alone can purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God." And if people will lay on a plaster that cannot cover the sore, they need not wonder, if being once skinned over, it should break out again. I know no need of a farther depth of the law work than to convince a sinner of his absolute need of Christ for justification and sanctification. And there is no depth at all of true repentance less or more but what flows from faith. So that if your peace and hope of heaven, have been built on the depth of the law work, or repentance, lay them not there again, but upon the blood of Christ entirely, as apprehended by faith. If you have seen the absolute need of Christ for sanctification as well as justification, this was sufficient to reach the end, namely your closing with Christ for all his salvation. And whatever be the defects in your repentance you must not stand off from believing till you have repented more deeply. If you do, you are egregious fools. But believe that you may repent. And the more evidence and confidence your faith in the promise hath your repentance will succeed the better. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born."

Satan also sometimes gives their hopes an universal shock, by plying their corruptions hard, and stirring up the muddy pool of the heart, till there is not one drop of clear water to be seen in it; but whatever of heaven be in the heart, hell is uppermost. This is the heaviest case of all. I will not advise a person in this case to ex-

ert himself in seeking evidences for heaven. No, it were cruelty indeed to order such a person to read his evidences, before the smoke of hell be got out of the house and he gets his candle lighted. The man's proper work in such a case is to believe, hope against hope, to close with Christ anew for all his salvation, from the guilt and power of sin; and to hold by the promise of justification and sanctification also, in direct opposition to all the noise that corruption makes: till the power of sin being subdued, by faith, his darkness be removed, so that he may behold his evidences again.

The cause of this, as of the rest, ordinarily is, the soul's falling secure and grieving the Spirit, for which cause they are left to fall like Samson before the Philistines. And the proper expedient is to renew their faith and repentance before the Lord, because they have sinned, to wrestle by faith through the temptation, till they get their feet fixed upon a rock. It now remains,

III. That I give you some directions, in order to your obtaining evidences for heaven.

1. Labour to frame your conversation in such a manner as may be most conducible to this end. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." A careless way of walking with God, will keep the soul in a state of confusion. Evidences for heaven are not to be got at random. Solid and lasting evidences are ordinarily the product of a watchful and tender course of life. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." For this end quench not the Spirit; but cherish his motions, and kindly entertain his suggestions. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Those that slight his convictions, cannot expect his sealings. Sins against knowledge waste the conscience, and much darken evidences for heaven. These grieve the Spirit in a special manner, and when he is grieved he departs at least as to comforting influences. And there ordinarily follows such sins, deadness, and darkness, as bring distress to the soul. A wound to the Spirit of Christ, presageth a wound to our spirit.

You must also endeavour to keep grace in exercise, and labour to be growing Christians. The flaming fire is easily discerned, when a fire not blown cannot be perceived. It is the decay of grace that puts it out of sight, as plants in harvest go back and back till they are out of sight, their roots only remaining in the earth. Were we exercising grace in a way suitable to every condition of our life, and so keeping up communion with God in providence, and ordinances,

it would reflect a comfortable light upon our state. 2 Peter i. 5.—10.

You should be strict, holy, and regular in your walk. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Were that our daily exercise to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, it would be no great difficulty to gather evidences. He that takes a sinful liberty to himself in either table of the law, does so far darken the evidence of his love to God, and furnish suspicions of hypocrisy against himself. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. An uniform walk is the high way to comfort, whereas an inequality of conversation, when people hold a short time right, and a long time wrong, must needs make short lived joys, and long lasting darkness.

Again, Labour to keep up a relish of spiritual things by a heavenly frame. "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." It is no wonder people want evidences, when their hearts, clogged with a carnal earthly frame, cannot relish the things of God. "I have written unto him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." It is observed by some, that dogs cannot hunt well in the spring, because the sweet odours of the flowers and herbs, hinder them much from smelling the hare. Surely the less people are dead to the world, the less they are alive to God, and the more carnal and earthly they are in the frame of their spirits, they are the unfitter to gather evidences.

It is also necessary to acquaint yourselves with the scriptures. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Want of a proper acquaintance with the scriptures is one great reason of the darkness in which many walk. A Christian that would enjoy clear evidence, should much study two books, the book of God, and the book of his own heart. Look without him into the Bible, and within him to his own heart. The attentive believing study of the Bible, would make him the better understand his own heart, both as to the good and evil of it; and the due observation of his heart, would be an excellent help to understand the Bible. Whom the Bible justifies God will never condemn, and whom it condemns he will not justify; for it is his own word. Read it for your own case.

You must also be much in prayer. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be

full." Prayer in faith, is an useful exercise, in which the sails of the soul being spread out, lie fair for a gale of the Spirit. It is a notable mean to gather the heart, and this is the proper place of the rendezvous of the graces of the Spirit.—There sorrow for, and hatred of sin, is stirred up: there love to God exerts itself, and there the spices that gave not their smell before are beaten, which sometimes give the soul a fulness of joy.

Finally, Be daily making application of the blood of Christ. This is to wash your feet, that is to wash off the guilt of daily infirmities. John xiii. 10. As we contract new defilement, we should be dipping daily, and that keeps the accounts clear, and a good conscience.

Direction 2.—Make use of the means, by which evidences for heaven are immediately procured. Here you are called,

To set yourselves to solemn stated self-examination. Evidences for heaven often lie hid till they be searched out by this exercise, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. And they that would do this to purpose, for lasting comfort, would not satisfy themselves with those answers of peace, which their consciences give them at a sermon, or a prayer, or some occasional meditation. These comforts are too soon taken up to be permanent. They would even set some time apart for this work. They would do with their hearts, as men do with one with whom they have long accounts. A passing word will not do it. But they will set a time to make up their accounts and go through the particulars. And here I would advise, first of all, to take a back look of your ways, to see your sins in order to humiliation, and then to go and confess your sins to God as particularly as may be; and then to examine yourselves as to your willingness to receive Christ as he offers himself, and that being found, then to renew your closing with Christ by faith, and covenanting with God in him as distinctly and explicitly as you can. After which you may consider of your evidences for heaven. And there is a threefold evidence may be gained here.

1. An evidence *in* the act of faith, or closing with Jesus Christ. This is more or less clear according to the strength of faith. In all faith of adherence there is some evidence. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." For a sensible soul will never lay its weight on that which it does not believe will bear it, though it may be accompanied with doubts which is the weakness of the evidence. And that there is some evidence in the nature of faith, is plain from the Old Testament names

of it, *trusting, staying*, and the like; and from the New Testament names, *Confidence, full assurance of faith*, and the like. This evidence is founded on the promise of the gospel, upon which the person is to believe that Christ is ready to give himself to him, and that the soul accepting the offer, Christ is his, without any regard to any qualification distinct from this acceptance. Just as if a man should hold out a loaf of bread to a great company, saying whosoever will, shall have it. Were there a starving hungry creature there, what would he do, but presently reach out his hand, and reaching out to it would say, then it is mine, and catch hold of it while he is speaking these words. Wherefore seeing God allows you this evidence, carry it as far as you can, the farther always the better. Only this evidence cannot satisfy others, but only the man himself. Therefore,

2. There is another evidence may be obtained here, and that is an evidence *from* the act of faith, and this is obtained by reflection upon the direct act of faith or closing with Christ. Such evidence had the Eunuch when he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And Paul when he said, "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Even as by the light of a candle, we see the candle itself as well as other things, so believing we may know that we do believe, and that therefore Christ is ours, and heaven ours, though we can see no other gracious qualifications in us, but what are included in the act of faith. For this evidence it is necessary that we know well what faith is, and what the scripture makes over to it. So the reasoning runs thus, whosoever believeth shall be saved, and whosoever renouncing their own wisdom and all other guides, give up themselves to Christ, receiving and resting upon him as their teacher, guide, and leader for ever; and renouncing their own righteousness, all confidence and worth in themselves, their doing or suffering, and receive and rest on Christ alone for righteousness and the atonement, and heartily giving up with all their idols, resign themselves wholly to Christ's government: They believe and shall be saved. But I, (may a person on the act of believing and closing with Christ say) do renounce all these, and do receive Christ, therefore I believe I shall be saved. Now this is good evidence, not only to satisfy ourselves, but to give a rational ground of our hope to others. But because all true faith is effectual to sanctify the soul, "for God purifies the hearts of his people by faith," and there is no true faith without the fruits of holiness accompanying it, therefore the best and strongest evidence is when to the two former is joined.

3. An evidence from the fruits of faith. And this evidence is as

manifold as there are fruits of faith, or other graces of the Spirit besides faith. These fruits of faith are what we principally mean by evidences for heaven and these are to be gathered up in self-examination in which three things are to be done.

1. The word which contains the laws of the kingdom of heaven, by which our title to it must be decided, is to be produced, and the characters and marks of the state of grace are from that word to be fairly laid out as the touchstone by which we are to examine our state. Isaiah viii. 20. And here special heed must be taken to fix the mark according to the word, that it neither be too low and wide, to take in those that are still creeping on the earth, and formal hypocrites; nor yet too high and narrow above the reach of babes in Christ and excluding weak believers.

2. The scripture mark being laid out, the man is impartially as in the sight of God to bring his case to the touchstone, and see whether it be to be found in him.—Let him search and see if there be in him a work of God answering to that word of God. And here he must beware of either self-love on the one hand, causing him to believe that to be in him, which conscience after an impartial search connot find, or of weakness in denying that to be in him to which his conscience bears witness, notwithstanding many infirmities.

3. The mark being found in him, he is thereupon to conclude, that according to the scripture he has a title to heaven, and assure himself of it upon the evidence of the word of God in the scriptures, and of the work of God in the heart. And thus evidences for heaven are gathered in the way of self-examination.

To make this plain by an example. A person examining himself pitches on the love of God as a mark of one in the state of grace, because the word says, *I love them that love me.* But seeing a hypocrite may have a sort of love to God, therefore it must be duly circumstantiated; as, 1. The true love of God is a love to him, not for his benefits only, but for himself, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." All that is in God is God, for he is no compound being, therefore he that loves God for himself, loves all his perfections, his holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and omniscience. 2. True love to God is supreme transcendant love; it is a love to him above all other objects, lawful as well as unlawful. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." 3. Such persons love the whole image of God expressed in the whole law, even where it crosseth their corrupt inclinations, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." No hypocrite can thus love God. Thus the word is produced, and the mark from it is fixed.

In the next place, the man is to bring his case to this touchstone, and he is as in the sight of God to examine himself by these or the like questions. Do I love God? Do I love him not only for what he is to me, but for what he is in himself? Are his glorious perfections, his exact justice, his spotless holiness, his inviolable truth and all seeing eye, are these hateful to me, are they lovely and amiable perfections in my sight? Do I love him above all persons, and all things? Would I be content to part with what is dearest to me for him, and rather than to part with him, even though without him I were secured from hell and earth? His holy law, that transcript of his nature, which is so contrary to my corrupt nature, do I love it though it crosseth my corrupt nature, is it holy, just and good in my eyes, even that part of it which condemns and forbids those most beloved lusts of mine? If conscience answers yea to these questions as in the sight of God, then the man has an evidence for heaven, namely, love to God, therefore he is a son and an heir of God.

Finally, He ought upon that scriptural evidence to conclude, therefore God loves me, because he loves them that love him, and my conscience bears me witness that I truly love him. Thus evidences may be gathered on other marks in the way of self-examination. And those that can write would do well to write them.

Now the business of evidences being thus begun, in solemn stated self-examination, they may be increased by daily observation. And there are here two things jointly to be observed.

1. The way of the Lord's dealing with us. This we should carefully notice that we may perceive whether he deals with us as with children or not. "And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever." But it is to little purpose to notice it, if it be not withal compared with the scripture. For from thence only we can learn the way of the Lord's dealing with his own.

2. The way of our souls towards God. This we should also carefully observe that we may perceive whether our way be the way of the Lord's children. And this we cannot know, unless we first notice the way, dispositions and motions of our own souls, and then compare them with the scripture. Thus some have gathered evidences in reading some portion of the Lord's word, as particularly a psalm containing the breathings of a gracious soul towards God, while, in the meantime, they have seen and felt the same breathings in their own spirits, though they could not pretend to the same degree of them. For if one reading such a portion of the Lord's word, do withal read his own heart and soul in the words of the inspired

penman, he may very well conclude he has the same spirit which he had, though not in the same measure.

But because the Lord's way of dealing with a man, as with his own children, does produce in that man that disposition and motion of soul that is in his children, they cannot well be separated, but should be jointly considered, for in this lies the soul's communion with God, which is always a mutual intercourse betwixt the Lord and the soul. Now there are four things I would recommend to the daily observation of Christians, that would add to and increase their evidences procured and fixed in the way of solemn stated self-examination, which I do think ought to proceed as a foundation to all that would have lasting comfort by evidences.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ executing his offices in them. As the child is nourished by the mother in whose womb it is conceived; so those that are brought into the state of grace by closing with Christ in all his offices are preserved and nourished in it, by his executing these offices in them. So far then as you can discern in yourself Christ executing these offices in you, so far you have solid evidence of your faith in, and union with Christ.

If then upon your dependence on the Lord Jesus for light and teaching, you find your souls let into a sanctifying view of spiritual things; for example, of your own sinfulness and nothingness which make you vile, and Christ precious in your eyes; of the evil of sin, to hate it more; of God's majesty and greatness, to fear and love him more; of Christ's excellency, fulness and suitableness so as to prize him, rest in him, and trust in him more; the world's vanity so as to draw your heart more from it unto the Lord. If you find an enlivening light into the holy word conveyed into your hearts, or have any difficulty to be cleared in your way at any time, which you have tabled before the Lord, left with him, and depended on him for clearing it, and have got seasonable light into it: these are plain indications of Christ's exercising his prophetical office in you: I call it a sanctifying view, for all such light from the Lord has a tendency to holiness, which is next to the glory of God, the great scope of all Christ's offices. "I am, said Jesus, the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures."

Again, If at any time your consciences are fried by the fiery law touching upon guilt lying on you, and all your righteousness of doing and suffering, confessing, praying, and repenting, gives way like quick-sand under your feet, so that there is no standing before

the angry God upon them, or any of them, you then feel your sinking soul fixed as on a rock upon the blood of Christ. If you shelter yourself under the covert of his righteousness alone, and by application of that blood recover your peace and confidence with God; and make use of that blood alone as the only refuge against wrath, and lay it as the only foundation of your peace with God, and the only procuring cause of God's favour to you, and in one word, rest under the covert of that blood: that is Christ exercising his priestly office in you.—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Finally, If you find that Lord to whom you have given up yourself by providences and ordinances, more and more subduing you to himself in a cordial resignation, and more ready and cheerful obedience to his will: if you find the sovereign authority of his holy laws, because they are his laws, swaying your hearts to his ways; and being sensible of your inability to mortify your corruptions, you depend upon him for this strength, in the use of means appointed by him, and so get your feet upon the necks of them or any of them in some measure. This is Christ executing his kingly office in you, "For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."

2. Answers of prayer in the fulfilling of promises depended upon before the Lord. Every answer of prayer is not an evidence for heaven. "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." Nor yet every receiving of a thing contained in a promise, as deliverance from trouble; for every thing contained in a promise, that comes to a man, does not come by virtue of the promise, it may come by common providence. But when the mercy contained in a promise is desired of God in prayer, and is drawn out by dependence on the promise through Christ, so that the prayer is answered and the promise fulfilled, that is an evidence for heaven, or of the Lord's love. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." For there is a real communion betwixt God and the soul, the soul depending on God by faith in his word, and God giving to the soul according to his word. And thus the mercy comes in the channel of the covenant, so it is an evidence of the Lord's love; though in itself it be but an ordinary thing, as it were the reconciling and pacifying of an offended neighbour or brother, of which we have a remarkable instance in Jacob and Esau, Gen. xxxiii. 10. And such answers of prayer, as they come in the channel of the holy covenant, so they advance holiness in the heart,

and they bind the soul more to holy obedience. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." They also enlarge the heart with thankfulness to the Lord, and make the receiver rejoice more in the giver, than in the gift. "Hannah prayed and said, my heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation."

3. The outlettings of the Lord's Spirit into the heart in religious duties. I do the rather take notice of this, that several do give this for their experience in religion and lay weight on it; namely, That they find that they are not always alike in duties, but sometimes bound up, and sometimes much enlarged. But I fear all that feel this, cannot duly circumstantiate it; but some way deceive themselves. Know then, nature has its own enlargements as well as grace. The stony ground hearers receive the word with joy. Esau is in a flood of tears when he is seeking the lost blessing. A man may at a time get another heart, like Saul, 1 Sam. x. 9. and yet never get a new heart. But to describe these outlettings that you may see whether they be gracious influences and may pass for evidences. Consider,

1. If they be gracious influences they will be humbling, "Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." And the more such influences come upon us, the more they will humble the soul. Witness Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 4—11. For the influences of the Spirit are like the waters of the deluge, which the more that they increased, they carried the ark the nearer heaven, and the nearer that the soul comes to God, who is light and in whom is no darkness at all; the more its sinfulness, weakness, wants, and nothingness must needs appear. But there is a kind of humiliation, which, because it is not deep enough, becomes the foundation of pride of heart. Peter had a touch of it when he said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." And the humblings which some persons have got, such as they were, have indeed been grounds of lifting them up, like a young beggar that lifts up himself among his neighbours, because he is newly furnished with implements for the trade of begging. Therefore,

2. Gracious influences gradually work out self, and the more they increase, the more they kill self, that great competitor with Christ. "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." They more and more remove

the rotten grounds of confidence with God, namely, our imperfect performances of duties, meltings of heart, mournings, humiliations, and the like; that the soul has nothing left it to depend upon, but the blood of Christ; but his obedience to the law of sufferings unto death. Thus they are brought to rejoice in Christ Jesus and to have no confidence in the flesh. So that the more and the better the Christian does his duty, the less he sees of his own to depend upon.

3. They are sanctifying. They promote holiness in the heart. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first born." They are like John Baptist, a burning as well as a shining light. They excite a man to the performance of moral duties required in the ten commandments, making him more conscientious in his duty to God and in his duty to his neighbour also. If a man has been in duties taken into the temple of God, the air of it will appear about him in the substantial duties of morality, when he comes abroad into the world. And whatsoever is without this, is but counterfeit or delusion. For the moral law of love to God and our neighbour, with all the moral duties belonging to it, (as they have been explained to you on the commandments) are the eternal indispensible rules of righteousness, to reduce men to the obedience of which Christ died, and the Spirit is given, and instituted worship is required.

4. The way of providence towards them in common things. "Who is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." It is in the world as in a family, where the father of the family provides both for children and servants; but there is something in his way peculiar for the children. I believe there is a speciality in God's way of dispensing common things to his people, which it were worth enquiring into, though perhaps not so easy to find out. But I judge, if a person can observe it to be the ordinary way of providence with him, not to let him come too easily by common mercies, but to put impediments in the way of them, so as to oblige him to carry the matter before God in prayer, and to withhold it from him even then, till he see himself absolutely unworthy of it, and be brought to an entire resignation to the will of God in it, to give it or withhold it; and even to drive it to the very point of hopelessness, in respect of second causes, that he may have nothing but God himself to trust for it; and then, even then, seasonably to bring it to his hand; that man may think that God takes

the way with him that he takes with his own, and it may be a good additional evidence. See the rule, Psal x. 17. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." And the example in the case of Jacob, Gen. xxxii. See also 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

3. Use and improve the sacrament of the Lord's supper for this end, because it is appointed, that the Lord's people may be assured that Christ is theirs and with him all things. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" In it Jesus Christ condescends to preach his love and good-will to the very eyes of poor doubting Christians, who, sensible of their own vileness and unworthiness, though they desire Christ above all, yet cannot think his desire is towards them. Therefore, that they may not wrong his love any more, by thinking that it can never pitch upon the despicable object, that has nothing with which to hire it, he goes farther with them in the sacrament, than in the word preached. The word brings the report of his love to their ears, the sacrament brings it to their eyes, and what we see affects us more than what we hear. The word speaks only in the general, the sacrament points at every communicant whose soul opens to receive Christ and his love, and says to every one, *broken for you.* It is the profanity among those of the common rabble, and the want of soul exercise among professors, that makes so few communicants while there are so many spectators. A deep sense of personal vileness, and an ardent desire of evidence of the Lord's love, would lay their jay-feathers, that for the faults of others, real or pretended, keep them from the communion table, where the institution of Christ is observed and the sacrament dispensed by ministers sent in his own way.

Question. How may I improve the sacrament for evidence? *Answer*, I have already directed you to self-examination, forget not that in the first place. That being done, Then,

Before you come to the Lord's table, renew your covenant with God and closing with Christ as solemnly, particularly, and diligently, as you are capable; and take the stones of the place (if you please) where you do it, witnesses to the transaction. And when you are at the table, remember that you receive and close with Christ anew, that you may be the more capable to perceive the real bargain which the sacrament is to seal.

Having thus closed with Christ, look on the bread and wine as seals of the covenant; and do Christ the honour, when he speaks by his sacramental word, *This is my body broken for you*, to believe him.

—That is, believe Christ is indeed yours, and that his body was really broken for you; and look on that bread and wine as God's seal to it, which he will not deny his own institution, and administered in his name by his messengers called for that effect. If you have no mind to believe it, why will you sit down at that table? If you have, then see you do it. This will honour Christ, and advance your evidence and sanctification. And keep up the belief of it afterwards, and recal to mind the sealed bargain when doubts arise.

Lastly, Pray for the testimony of the Spirit. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." This is that which may quite raze all doubts and fears. He attests the truth of the scriptures and the truth of grace in the heart. Of the one he says, this is my word; of the other, this is my work. And so lets the soul see without hesitation its title to heaven.

To conclude, This is the way to prepare you for the sacrament, to help you to a holy life, to a safe and comfortable death, and to glorify God and edify others in your death, being capable to give a reason of the hope that is in you. Remember you are warned, stirred up, and directed to this so much neglected, though most necessary duty. Cast not the counsels of God behind your back in your life, lest you hear of it bitterly in your death. "But if you know these things, happy are you if you do them." Amen.

Penpont Communion, May 24, 1716.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT BEING OFFENDED IN CHRIST.

SERMON V.

MATTHEW xi. 6.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

THESE words are the conclusion of our Lord's answer to the question upon which John's disciples came to him. John himself had no doubt of Christ's being the Messiah, for he was his forerunner to point him out to the world; he had baptized him, seen the Spirit descending, and had given testimony to him as the Lamb of God, John i. 29—35. But it seems his disciples were not so firm in the faith, and therefore he sends them to Christ to be from himself fully satisfied in that grand point. And indeed, nothing less than a di-

vine power can silence the clamours of unbelief going about to raze foundations.

Our Lord gives them answer by referring them to his works compared with the word, Isa. xxxv. 4—6. and lxi. 1—3. The things which were prophesied concerning the Messiah, they heard and saw to be fulfilled in him, and therefore behoved to conclude him to be the Messiah. Divine power can cast such a beam of light over the works and word of God, as will stare the strongest unbelief out of countenance, and make that raging lust fall down unable to create more trouble.

But because his outward mean appearance was a vail, through which most of the world could not see, he declares them happy whose faith carries them over those things in him over which the graceless world, the despisers of the gospel, stumble and fall to their own utter destruction. "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." In which words, there is,

1. A fatal stumble in the way to happiness, which many of the hearers of the gospel make. They are offended in Christ. They stumble at him. Observe here, the object of their offence, Jesus Christ. It is at him the world is offended. The God that made and guides the world, the Saviour that redeemed them, does not please the world. What wonder then that others cannot do it. There is something in the mystery of Christ, with which the unbeliever will always be finding fault. The Jews were offended at the meanness of his life, and in this the disciples of John seem to have joined them. The Gentiles were offended at the ignominy of his death. Some at one thing, some at another, and every unbeliever at something in him. This is surely a great mistake in them. Jesus Christ is holy, and there is nothing in him to give offence. The world is unholy, and takes offence at him. He is the brightness of his Father's glory: and they like owls and bats are blinded at the shining sun, and therefore carefully keep at a distance from him. They are offended. In the Greek, *scandalized*. The word scandal, in a natural sense, signifies, 1. Some obstacle in one's way, by which he is stopped in his passage; particularly a sharp stake, which soldiers put in the field in time of war, to wound the feet and legs of the enemy that were to follow them that way. 2. A stone or block in the way, over which men are apt to fall. A trap or snare to catch beasts. This shews what a dreadful sin, and soul destroying evil, an offence given is; and withal, what a soul ruining the taking offence is, and the stumbling over real stumbling blocks.

Now the blind world by reason of their own corruption, are thus offended or scandalized in Christ. "And he shall be for a sanctu-

ary; but for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken." He is the way to the Father, but they see something in him which they cannot digest, and therefore they stop, or go off the way. They stumble at him, looking for matters in him, according to their carnal wish, they are disappointed, and they cannot get over that. Thus eventually, he is a trap and a snare to them, by which their ruin is more secured than ever. Their disease gathers strength from the remedy abused.

2. In the text there is the happiness of those who escape this fatal stumble. He that is not offended in Christ, who sees nothing in Christ that offends him, nothing in him to turn him away from him, nor to stop his going forward to him, and to the Father through him; he is a happy man, blessed here and shall be blessed hereafter. The party is described negatively, to shew us that there can be no neutrality among the hearers of the gospel. He that is not offended in Christ is one that is well pleased with him, with every thing in him, or about him; and he that is not so is offended in him.

Doctrine. Stumbling at some one thing or another in Christ abounds so much in the world that they are happy persons who are preserved from falling along with the rest. In prosecuting this subject, I shall shew,

I. What it is to stumble at Christ and be offended in him.

II. That stumbling at Christ abounds very much in the world.

III. That they are happy indeed who are kept from being offended in him. And then add some improvement.

I. To shew what it is to stumble at Christ, and be offended in him.

This is a very awful matter. For a man to die of his disease, when he might have been cured, is sad; but it is a double death for one to destroy himself by the abuse of a remedy prescribed that would have cured him infallibly. It has reference to four things in the general.

1. To the grand device of salvation through Jesus Christ, laid in the infinite wisdom of God, and fixed by the divine counsel. This is the foundation on which the Father has laid the weight of the elect's salvation, and on which he requires all to lay their weight for eternity. And at this the unbelieving world ever stumbles, and their hearts can never fall in with it. *We preach*, says the apostle, *Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*

2. To the offer of Christ made in the gospel. There he is offered to sinners, to be the Captain of their salvation. To be the sinner's head, Lord, and husband. To be their Prophet, Priest, and King, their *all* and instead of *all*. But sinners love not the offer, they stumble at his offices; there is something in them at which they perpetually stand, and so they cannot come forward. *Ye will not*, says he, *come unto me that ye might have life.*

3. To the making use of Christ for all the purposes for which the Father has given him. Here they stand again. They are obstinate patients that will not receive the remedy, though they should die of their disease. If their own way will do with them, good and well; but as for the Lord's way they are offended at it, and cannot fall in with it. "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling stone."

4. To the practical understanding of sinners. They ever form a wrong judgment of Christ, and nothing less than overpowering grace will rectify their apprehensions of him. They still say what is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? It is true they may please themselves and others, with fine speculations about Christ. If they be Ministers they may preach him, or professors may talk of him and recommend him to others. But in this they are like the mountebank, who recommends his drugs to others, yet perhaps in the meantime he himself abhors them and makes no use of them. I find no fault in him, says Pilate, yet he condemned him. So the unrenewed world constantly stumble in their views of Christ with respect to practice. "If they knew the gift of God, and who Christ is, they would ask of him and he would give them living water." "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee." This stumbling at Christ, lies in these four things,

1. The blind soul ever finds some fault in the mystery of Christ. There is always something in or about Christ, that disgusts the sinner, is quite disagreeable and shocking to him. The Son of God is not a match suitable to those, whose minds are not savingly enlightened. "To them he hath no form nor comeliness, and when they see him, there is no beauty that they should desire him." Though his Father is well pleased with him, and he hath the hearts and praises of all the saints, yet they are not pleased with him. If they would speak their minds, they would tell you, they see not how they could be happy in him for all.

2. That which disgusts them, is what they cannot get over. There is something not to be found in him, which they cannot want, and something in him which they cannot endure. And by no art can they reconcile their hearts to it. It is with many as with the young man, "who was sad at what Jesus said to him, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." Many a time they are aiming at the bargain betwixt Christ and their souls, but they can never finish it. For there is always one thing that stands between Christ and them. His holiness will not allow him to yield it to them, and their corruption will not allow them to yield it to him. And so in the end the soul parts with Christ, perhaps with grief and tears, because it will do their way, and they cannot do otherwise, Mark x. 21, 22.

3. Because they cannot get over that one thing, it keeps Christ and the soul asunder effectually. Could the Jews have got over the offence of the mean appearance of Christ, and reconciled it to their own notion of the Messiah, they would have been fond of him, as they were while he was not come. "He was then the Lord whom they sought." But the bargain must needs be marred, where the parties cannot agree. And there can be no uniting with Christ by faith, while there is any one objection against him reigning in the heart. We must be *all* his, or none at all. We must receive whole Christ, or want him altogether.

Lastly, This keeping Christ and the soul asunder, the soul is at length thereby ruined, and brought into a worse case, than if Christ had never come in the way. "If I had not come, says he, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." For then the remedy for sin is despised, and while that continues the disease must needs be desperate. And none can think that their debt will be so severely exacted as those who have refused a cautioner. And as the sourest vinegar comes of the most generous wine, so the vengeance that comes on the despisers of the gospel will be the most terrible. No fire will burn so keenly, as that which comes from the altar. We now proceed,

II. To shew that stumbling at Christ abounds very much in the world. Let us view the heaps upon heaps that are lying broken, snared and taken.

1. Let us take a view of those that are lying rotting above the ground in open profanity; they are kept away from Christ, even by the very far off sight of him and his way. "There are many at this day, who cry, let us break their bands asunder and cast their cords from us. We will not have this man to reign over us." These are

the profane persons, and such as will not take on so much as a form of godliness. They are terrified at the holiness of his way, and therefore they run far from him. They keep at such a distance from him, they will not set their foot on the holy ground. They are so far from covenanting with God, that it is evident, they will engage to be any thing sooner than to be the Lord's. Our holy Redeemer does not please these people more than a palace would please swine.

2. Let us take a view of those who are lying dead upon their murdered convictions. Our Lord has taken some persons in hand to cure them, and by the Spirit of conviction, he has begun to let blood of the heart vein of their beloved lusts. But the pain of this operation hath made them disagree with the Physician, start up and break the lancet, and stifle their convictions. And now their wound is whole, their convictions are gone, and their conscience, which was so uneasy before, is now as dead as stone. Go where they please, they are not troubled. Darts are as stubble.

3. Those that are lying broken and pining away, having stumbled over the cross of Christ. Like the stony ground hearers, "not having root in themselves but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." Many have made a good appearance in a fair day, when in the time of a storm, have soon turned their backs upon Christ. It is now long since the times of persecution, and yet there is no doubt, but the wounds then received are lasting with many to this day. But I fear that private crosses in the time of the Church's peace, have made greater havock in the case of many professors, than ever public ones did. And O! but it is much to wait upon the Lord, in all the turns of providence, which may be in our lots and not to be offended in the great manager of all. They may follow Christ far, time and circumstances may at length cause to draw back.

4. Those that are fallen away from the lusts of Christ's consolation, to the fulsome breasts of the world and their own lusts. In every age there are many like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt, who for a time kept up in the wilderness, but afterwards lost hopes of Canaan, and fell a "lusting, and even the children of Israel also wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat?" We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick. Such persons keep steady and flourishing a while, so long as religion is new to them. But the grace which they receive being awakening only, and not changing, and their souls never truly uniting with

Christ; their comfort and satisfaction from that quarter dry up, when once the novelty is away: so they do not find that in Christ which they expected, and therefore they are offended, and even fall away to their former courses, having entirely lost their taste and relish for spiritual things.

Finally, Look at those whose soul exercises have issued in putting their case in the hands of a Physician of no value. There are many who being awakened by a spirit of conviction, and are really exercised about their souls' condition, put their case to Christ for healing. But not being able or willing to wait his time, till the wound be sufficiently searched, but being for peace at any rate, they are offended in him, and so put themselves in the hand of the law that wounded them. Thus they make themselves whole, not by the believing application of the blood of Christ, but by their prayers, tears, and external reformation. And so they settle down upon their lees farther from Christ than ever. It now remains,

III. To shew that they are happy indeed who are kept from being offended in him. What this attainment is, you may know from what is here said of it. It consists in this. This happy soul is well pleased with Christ, and has no objections against him. The soul says of him, "His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely." The heart of this person now corresponds in all respects to the covenant of peace, and says that it is well ordered in all things and sure. There is nothing in the mystery of Christ which they desire to have out, and there is nothing out which they desire to have in it. They are pleased with the gospel offer, they love Christ in his person, natures, offices, relations, all that is in him or about him is welcome to them. And are all such blessed ones? They are. For,

1. Their eyes are opened to see that superlative glory in Christ, that all the unbelieving world cannot discover. And therefore I may say, Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. And indeed in this case the hidden glory of the Mediator is taken up, darkening all created excellency. Whereas the most piercing eyes of nature can never see through the vail. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." But they who are pleased with him can say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth."

2. Their hearts are new formed, cast into a new mould, otherwise they could never be pleased with him. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of

the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Adam's covenant is engraved in our nature, and the way of believing is the very reverse of nature's way. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God." Sin is our natural element, and though it be our disease, yet we naturally love it, and cannot but love it so as to loathe the physician. If then the heart be pleased with Christ, it is turned and changed, and made willing in a day of power. The natural enmity is cured, and the heart of stone is become a heart of flesh.

3. That soul cannot fail to embrace Christ, to receive him by faith and unite with him. For to be well pleased with Christ, is in effect to say amen to the great bargain. And the cause is won when the sinner is pleased with the gospel offer. Now he is the person, "who having found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Lastly, Hence all the blessings of the covenant fall to the share of him who is well pleased with Christ, as to his having a right to them, as a believer through Jesus Christ.

Uses for improvement.

1. Be convinced then of this bias of the heart, this disposition of the soul to stumble at Jesus Christ. O, says the poor fool, would any thing in Jesus Christ offend me? Pleased with Christ! who would not be well pleased with him? Alas! you know not what spirits you are of! you are little acquainted with the natural enmity of your souls against the Lord, and particularly with that corruption of your nature, by which it is strongly averse to the gospel plan of salvation. If it be not so, how can it be an evidence of the grace of God in the text, to be well pleased with him. "While Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, he is to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

I tell you many are pleased with Christ, as Jacob was with Leah, while he thought she had been Rachel. It is a mistaken Christ whom they love, even as sure as they love their lusts. *No man can serve two masters.* And if a new light would spring up in their dark hearts, they would see it to be so. Many love Christ very well, to be a rest to their consciences, while they can get the world and their lusts to be a rest to their hearts. And thus they can do very well

between the two. But take away these from them, and their hearts can rest no more than a fish drawn out of the water till it be in it again. Their souls can never truly say as the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Now was ever Christ a covering for the eyes to them. Nor did they ever find such sweetness in Christ as they have in following their lusts.

2. I exhort one and all of you, that have a mind for any share of eternal happiness, and particularly communicants, that you would try yourselves this night, whether you be well pleased with Christ or not; that so if there be any thing which you have stumbled at in Christ in time past, you would now come over it, as ever you would see the face of God in mercy, and would not have it part betwixt Christ and you. And for this purpose let your consciences put the following questions.

1. Is there any thing in Christ's salvation offered in the gospel that offends you? Salvation from the wrath of God, is but the half of Christ's salvation. I doubt not but you are pleased with this part of it. But are you pleased with the part which is salvation from sin? "He saves his people from their sins?" What sayest thou, sinner? Christ is saying to thee, wilt thou be made whole? Wilt thou be made clean?

Wilt thou be made content, that the Physician not only remove death, but the disease also? Not only take away the guilt, but break the power, and also at last destroy the very existence of sin in you? Wilt thou be content to hold out the right eye to him that he may pluck it out, and the offending right hand that he may cut it off? If not, you are offended in Christ, his salvation does not please you. But if you come forward to him, he is pleased and you are welcome.

2. Is there any thing in Christ's offices that offends you? Any thing in his prophetical office that offends? Our Lord has the Father's commission to guide poor sinners through the wilderness of this world to Immanuel's land. "He hath given him to be a witness unto the people, a leader and commander to the people." He leads them by his word and Spirit, for it is not his will that they be trusted with the guiding of themselves. What think you of this commission. Will you take Christ this day for your guide for ever, or will you hold the reins still in your own hands, though you should lead yourselves to destruction? Will you then renounce your own wisdom, and take him for your sole oracle? I am sure you may know that your wilfulness has many a time shaken off this yoke. What say you of it now? If you have nothing to object against our Lord's

command as a prophet, then I hope you will endeavour to shake off self-conceit, and lean no more to your own understanding. You will also resolve not to be such strangers as you have been, to seeking and depending on the Lord's light, in all matter of sin and duty.

You will allow the light of the Lord's word freely to turn you from your prejudices and preconceived opinions. And that a little child shall lead you, if he can but hold out the Lord's word, pointing you the way. You will prize his ordinances, and not make the Lord's work a sinking burden to the messenger, by despising his message. Seeing the ministry of the word is one thing by which Christ executeth his peophetical office, therefore, "He saith, he that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." Again,

Is there any thing in his priestly office that offends you? Man is fallen. Justice is offended. God's device for the salvation of sinners is, that the Redeemer Christ be both priest and sacrifice, that he build the fallen temple of the Lord, and bear the glory, being the alone way to the Father. Will you venture your salvation on this foundation, renounce your own righteousness, all your doings and sufferings, and lay the whole weight of your acceptance with God on the merits of Christ's blood? and take him for your only intercessor and way to the Father. If you have nothing to object; here then you will humbly and heartily acknowledge, that you deserve nothing at God's hand, but that he would be just, if he should cast you off for ever. You will confess that you have nothing to recommend you to God, and dare trust nothing to any thing that is yours: and that if you be received of the Lord, there is nothing in or about you to engage him to you. You will look for the acceptance of your duties, not from any value in themselves, but through the merits of Christ. And that you will look for the acceptance of your persons and for all the favours from the Lord, only through the wounds of a Redeemer.

Again, Is there any thing in his kingly office that offends you? He has got the kingdom by his Father's gift, and it is his Father's decree that he rule sinners according to his own will and pleasure, and his holy laws? Are you content with this? Will you give up yourselves to him without reserve? Alas! will you say the armies of hell in my breast are not so easily dispossessed. True, but I hope you are not so closely blocked up, but there may be intelligence got betwixt Zion's King and you; and though you cannot subdue the rebels, will you be content to make an offer of the kingdom to him over your whole man? If so, then you will renounce and heartily give up with all your lusts without exception of one. You will also

look on Jesus Christ as your head of influences, for sanctification; and go no more out against temptations and to duties in your own strength, but in his strength who is mighty in battle. The long debate that has been betwixt providence and you, who should carve out your lot in the world, will be at an end. You will say, "He shall choose our inheritence for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved."

Lastly, Is there any thing in his covenant that offends you? Is there any thing in it that is not well ordered in your eyes? Does the taking up of the cross offend you? Or are you content to take him to follow him whithersoever he goes, and nothing shall part betwixt him and you? Blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in him. If nothing in Christ offends you, nothing in you will so far offend him, as to keep him at a distance from you. Nay if you be really offended and grieved at yourselves for that there is any thing in you so apt to be offended in Christ, it shall not mar your communion with him.

But, O brethren, search your hearts this night, for they are deceitful, and put yourselves to an impartial trial. And where you find your heart offended at Christ, put it into his own hand to remove the offence, and to reconcile the heart and gain it entirely to himself. Amen.

Tweedsmuir communion Sabbath evening, June 17, 1716.

BELIEVERS LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN.

SERMON VI.

2 Corinthians iv. 18.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

You have now been eating your gospel passover, and should therefore be preparing for your journey through the wilderness. You have enlisted under the standard of Jesus Christ, and should march on to follow your leader. You will meet with difficulties in the way, that will make you in danger of fainting, standing still, and giving it over, as a journey which you are not able to accomplish. To prevent this, you must take your aim right, and still keep your eye upon it; looking not to the things which are seen,

but to the things which are not seen. In the text there are three things to be considered.

1. The mark which the Christian is to keep in view in his journey through the wilderness. The traveller will always be looking to something, and it is of great importance for the journey that he takes his view right. He must look, namely, with an attentive eye, as one does to a mark at which he shoots, taking his aim right. The object which the Christian is to keep in view is described

Negatively, He is not to look at the things which are seen. He must not look to, but overlook and disregard, those things that fall under his senses. The things of this world, by which natural men are led. It is Christ's call to his people, to leave the world with him, and for him, to lift their eyes and hearts from these things, and live like those of another world. "Come says he, with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon."

This object is described *positively*, "but at the things which are not seen." He must with an eye of faith, look to and keep in view, those things that are beyond the reach of the carnal eye. He must have an eye in his heart, to fix on those things that do not lie open to the view of his bodily eyes. God, and grace, and glory, which cannot be seen with our eyes, yet to them we must look.

2. Observe the reasonableness of this view, which the Christian hath. Religion is the most reasonable thing in the world. The world smiles in a very engaging manner on the Christian, to draw him after it, out of the Lord's way; but by these he will not be moved. It frowns bitterly, but he regards it not. What, is the man mad, says the carnal worldling? What is he looking for? What does he see? Why truly he sees other smiles that move him, other frowns that he seriously regards. And good reason, for the smiles and frowns to which worldly men look, are but temporal for a season; the world's favour and enmity also will soon be over. But the smiles and frowns to which the Christian looks are eternal; they will last for ever. Does he not then act most rationally. Observe,

3. The fruit of this believing view. It makes him follow Christ through good and bad report, while others turn their backs upon him. Particularly it keeps him from the ill of afflictions. It is a cordial to keep him from fainting under all pressures from the world. There is a thorn hedge in his way, but he breaks through it, seeing the paradise that is on the other side, ver. 16. "For which cause we faint not." It brings him good out of them. For while the view of things not seen, carries him through the hardest parts of his lot, he comes in the end to be a gainer and not a loser by his

afflictions, ver. 17, 18. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Doctrine.—They that would get safely through this world to Immanuel's land, must so look to things that are not seen, as to overlook, and put on a holy regardlessness of the things that are seen.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall,

I. Take notice of some things that are supposed in it.

II. Speak of the unseen things to which we are to look.

III. Shew in what respects we must look to them.

IV. Shew how we must overlook, and put on a holy disregard of the things that are seen. We are then,

I. To take notice of some things that are supposed in the text.

1. It is supposed that there is an unseen world, as well as a seen one. There is a future state into which we shall pass, when we are gone out of time. When we are dead, we are not done, but only enter into another state. This world is but *the present world*, so there is another world, called by our Saviour, *that world*, in opposition to this, Luke xx. 35.

2. That the things of the unseen world are of vastly greater importance, than those of the seen world. If we look to the upper part of the unseen world, there is a weight of glory that would infinitely counterbalance the best things here. It is called, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If we look to the lower part of it, there is a weight of wrath heavier by far than the worst things here.

3. We are all in our journey to the unseen world. This is but the place of our sojourning. However strongly we incline to make it our home, it will not be our long home. We can no more abide here, than a man going through a town in his journey, who comes in at one gate and goes out at another. "We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come." One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh. The saints in glory are come to their journey's end, the damned to theirs, we are only upon the way.

4. The things that are seen in our journey are apt to entangle us, to lead us wrong, and make the end miserable. If we stand to look and gaze upon them, we are ready to be frightened, or flattered out of our way, to our ruin; for the lions have their dens there, and the leopards their haunts in the most pleasant spots of it, Song iv. 1.

Finally, As we look now in this world we will live for ever in another world. It was looking that ruined man. The eyes were

the doors by which destruction at first entered. Our first parents got their first wound in the eye, Gen. iii. 6. And it is by looking we must be saved. "Look unto me, says Jesus, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." And now that we are on our journey through this ensnaring world, it concerns us highly to take our view right; for if we follow the sight of the eyes in our head, it will lead us into the snare of everlasting ruin.

How shall we take our view then, that we may get safely through? To answer this, let us proceed,

II. To speak of the unseen things to which we are to look and keep in view. To represent these things fully is what no mortal can do. "As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." We cannot even conceive them. Yet as a traveller may look to a mountain, though he can never grasp it in his arms, so we may look to what we cannot apprehend. Take a taste of the unseen things then, in these few particulars, assuring yourselves when we have said all, the half is not told.

O ye travellers setting out to Immanuel's land, take these directions along with you. You will see many things in your way at which you must not look, but at things unseen you ought to look.

1. Look at the unseen world, the better, the heavenly country. You will see a fair faced world, a bulky vanity, upon which most men are strongly bent. But as you love your souls do not stand looking at it. You must look at and keep in view the unseen world above the skies where glory dwells. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off." Look at Immanuel's land. It is the pleasant land. The land to which all the holy patriarchs and prophets directed their eyes. It is *a better country* than the best under the sun. Your Saviour is there and he bids you follow him with your eye, till you personally arrive in the happy place.

2. Look at the unseen God. You will see idols in abundance by the way, craving you to fall down and worship them. But you must look at the unseen God, as Moses did, when he was in the way, "For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." The seen world has three idols that keep many men in their embraces. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." But you must look at the holy Trinity, to be fully enjoyed in the unseen world. The Father, Son, and Spirit. This one God

is the first principle in all things, the fountain of all perfections, in whom our happiness lies, and therefore he is the chief end to whom we are to look, and in the enjoyment of whom only our souls can rest. Look to him then and keep your eye on him always.

3. Look to the way that leads to Immanuel's land. Keep your eye constantly upon it. You will see the way of the world, a broad way, an easy way, lying down the hill, and if you begin to look at it, you may be seduced into it, and in the end tumble into the chambers of death to which it leads. O! look then to the unseen way that leads to the unseen world where felicity and glory for ever dwell.

Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the unseen *personal way* to heaven. "I am, says he, the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Behold an unseen Jesus at the Father's right hand, who has purchased the pardon of sin, peace, grace, and glory by his precious blood to sinners; and by his intercession is preparing places for them in his Father's house of many mansions. Behold him sitting at the end of the race, with the crown in his hand, to give to him that so runs as to obtain. "Lay aside then every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith." Jesus is the glory of the upper house, and his superlative beauty draws the eyes of all the heavenly company to fix on him. Look to him then, though you see him not. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Remember also that holiness is the unseen *real way* to heaven. "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Were the form of godliness and the mere performance of external duties the way to glory, it would be a seen way. But it is not so. The christian life is an unseen, hidden life. *It is hid with Christ in God.* The new man *is the hidden man of the heart.* The king's daughter is indeed all glorious, but it *is within.* He that has no more religion than what eye can see, will be seen by all the world at length to have none at all. Faith, love, and all the duties of internal worship are unseen religion. Look to this, if ever you would see heaven; for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

4. Look at the unseen, happy, and glorious society of heaven. You will see carnal company, that will be agents for the devil to lead you off your way. But you must look at the unseen society

above. There dwell the saints and the angels singing their Hallelujahs to the Lamb, and to him that sitteth upon the throne. There full and uninterrupted communion with God is enjoyed; and this shall constitute the eternal happiness of the glorious inhabitants. "They shall be ever with the Lord. Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." There will be no solitude there, no unpleasant company there, no grief, no jarring strings in the harmony, "For God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

5. Look at the glorious reward of heaven. You will see petty profits, gains and advantages, which the men of the world are keenly pursuing, taking the world's offer trifling as it is. These are penny wise, and pound foolish; for while they gain a penny at one hand they are losing a talent at another. But do you look at the unseen profits of heaven, and like "Moses, have respect unto the recompense of reward." There is a treasure before you. A precious treasure which can neither be corrupted nor plundered. Not, however, a treasure of gold, for that is no treasure in the upper world, but serves only to pave the streets of the city, "which is of pure gold, as it were transparent glass." That the saints may eternally tread upon that, upon which the men of the world now set their hearts. But it is a treasure of glory. Even "a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." A matchless treasure for preciousness, for variety, solidity, and security, so that it can neither be exhausted nor lost. It will make you rich to the most extensive desires and everlasting satisfaction of your souls.

6. Look to the unseen, pure and lasting pleasures and honours of heaven. You will see insipid pleasures, empty honours, and short lived joys, which the men of the world are most actively pursuing, with all the earnestness of children running after butterflies. Yet these things when obtained are little worth, and far from being a recompense for their toil. But do you look at the unseen pleasures, those exquisite pure rivers of pleasures, which flow eternally from the full enjoyment of God, the blessed sight of his glory, which mortals cannot behold. Psal. xvi. 11. Look at the unseen honours which the saints shall obtain, when they arrive at their own country and get home to their Father's house. For then, they shall receive a crown, the very summit of worldly ambition, but such a crown as *fades not away; a kingdom that cannot be moved;* a throne, the highest that men are capable of. "To him that over-

cometh, saith Jesus, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." Look at the unseen joys that begin, when the world's joy ends. You shall hear the joyful sound of your Saviour's voice at the end of the race, saying, "well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

7. Look at the unseen rest of heaven. You will see crosses, tribulations, and perhaps bloody persecutions by the way, and feel them also. By these the god of this world will set himself to terrify you and draw you out of your way. But you must look at the unseen rest, peace, refreshment, and ease of Immanuel's land. "In the world, says Jesus, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." When you come to the everlasting rest, you shall no more have the least uneasy thought about all with which you have met. There you shall enjoy an everlasting calm, an eternal repose. "The gates of the city shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there." There the conquerors get on their crown, they lay aside their swords, and get the palm in their hands, and that land rings eternally with the shout of victory, victory for evermore.

8. Look at the fulness and complete happiness of heaven. You will see many wants and miseries in this world. The flesh will always be wanting something. What shall I eat? And what shall I drink? And wherewithal shall I be clothed? And many are so completely engaged in answering these questions, that they entirely forget *the things not seen.* But do you look at the fulness and complete happiness before you. They that can get forward will soon obtain a rich supply of all their wants. There is no want in Immanuel's land. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son, saith the Lord." There you will find God, and Christ, and a full covenant comprehending all to make the believer perfectly happy. And now small drops and foretastes of that fulness are given them in the way, but then it shall be told out to them in full and for ever more.

Uses of this Doctrine.

Use 1. Take these three lessons from it.

1. He is the wisest man that quits the world's certainty for hope. If ever you would be wise, you must become fools. Though the sight of the eyes is better than the wandering of the desire, yet the unseen things upon which faith fixes, are a thousand times better.

It is better to have God's bond, than the world's hand payment; for when the latter is spent and gone, the other will tell out for ever.

2. You will see your way through this ill world best, if you will shut your eyes. And indeed it would be a token for good, that you have seen the Lord this day, if your hearts within you were saying, as one sometimes said coming from duty, "Now my eyes, be thou shut." The sight of our eyes is apt to betray us into a thousand snares. You have been taking an unseen guide, follow not then the sight of your eyes, for they will make the world's molehills mountains before you. And remember they are best guided that follow Christ, as the blind man follows his guide. "I will bring, says he, the blind by a way which they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

3. They will get best through the world's snares, that look least at them. A holy contempt of the world's good and its ill, of its frowns and flatteries, is a noble preservative against them. Flee from idolatry, and from fornication, says the scripture. Turn your backs on them. It is the best way to entertain the world with a holy disdain. It was looking at the forbidden fruit, and it is tampering with temptation, that catches the soul in Satan's snare.

Use 2. Mind this doctrine, O Christian communicants!

1. When your former lusts come back to you, like Potiphar's wife to Joseph, offering you deadly poison in a golden cup. Look not to the things that are seen. It will be bitterness in the end, if you do. But look to him that is invisible, as he did, and say, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God. As obedient children, you must not fashion yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." You must not again sit down to dust, it is the serpent's meat; but you have unseen meat to eat in communion with God, to fit you for your journey to the unseen world.

2. When sloth comes to you, like Peter to Christ, covering a sharp sword with words softer than oil, saying, Master, spare thyself. What needs all this bitter repenting, wrestling in prayer, watching over heart and life? Less surely may suffice. Soul, take thine ease. Here is a sound sleep to be enjoyed on the sluggard's bed. A way strewed with roses. Look not to the things that are seen, if you were once asleep, you will be an easy prey to the robbers! And all you have obtained, you may quickly lose. "The

slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the substance of a diligent man is precious." Look to the things that are not seen, and you will see good reason to exert yourselves more and more.

3. When you return to your worldly employments, and your carnal companions come to you, as the chief priests to Judas, offering you thirty pieces, if you will betray Christ, look not then on the things that are seen, but on them that are not seen. You see their way, but look to the end of it. Their joy will be turned into weeping at last. "But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell." And remember, if you intend heaven you must forsake the company of those whose faces you see are not thitherward. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Lastly, When the enemies of God and his work may be let loose upon you, like the Jews on Christ, "gaping upon you with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion." Our adversaries are restless. But that is not the chief thing. An impure church looks like as if a fire were abiding it, to try of what metal we are. And who knows how far it may go. Look not then to the things that are seen: if you do, you will deny Christ. But look at the things that are not seen, and you will be carried through safely.

Tweedsmuir, Monday, June 18, 1716.

BELIEVERS LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN.

SERMON VII.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 18.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

III. I proceed to shew in what respects we must look to the things that are unseen.

1. We must believe the reality of them. Faith is the eye of the soul, that takes up the things not seen, and views the land afar off. It makes future things present, and discovers the reality of invisible things, "being the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." Faith goes upon divine testimony, and sees these

things by the help of the map of the heavenly Canaan drawn in the scriptures. This is the faith of the operation of God to which the world is a stranger. For in effect to most men, the doctrines of the Bible concerning things not seen, are but as idle tales, and all the promises about them but as fair words; of this the small regard which they pay to them in practice is an evident proof.

2. We must value them in our practical judgment above all other things. For this looking to them plainly implies an overlooking of other things. "Yea, doubtless, says Paul, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." You must not look on them only as good, but as of all good things the best, and not only as the best in general, but best for you at all times. So that when the world makes its offer of seen things, you must prefer the Saviour's offer of unseen things.

3. We must love and desire them above all. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee." If we do not thus love and desire them, our looking to them will be to no purpose for supporting us under sufferings and carrying us forward through the world. Look at them with superlative love and desire, breathing out your souls for these unseen things. "When the many say, who will shew us any good? Do you cry, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou has put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Hence we find the saints breathing after the land that is afar off, saying, "We have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." After the Lord of the land, saying, "O that we knew where we might find him." And after the perfect holiness and felicity of heaven. "For in this tabernacle we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

4. We must make them our main scope and aim, looking to them as one does at a mark at which he will shoot. Let it be your chief end to seek God, and not yourselves, to glorify and please your unseen Lord and Master, and to attain the enjoyment of him for ever. Let all things else be but secondary work in comparison of this. Be assured your happiness lies not in this present world; the sweetest smiles of it cannot make you happy, and the severest frowns of the world cannot make you miserable. If you obtain the unseen things, you gain all; if not, you gain nothing.

5. We must accustom ourselves to the habitual consideration of them. For it is not a glance at them on the Sabbath, or at a com-

munion, that will answer the grand purpose, but a fixed looking at them in the whole course of our lives. Whatever we have in hand, and wherever we be, each of us should be ready to say, "I have set the Lord always before me, and when I am awake I am still with him." Our conversation must be in heaven now, if we expect to be received into it at death. We must keep the other world habitually in our view while we walk through this.

6. We must entertain the hope of unseen things. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." The soul of man is an empty thing and must be fed by hope, till it come to enjoyment. And if there be not settled hope of unseen things, the heart will naturally embrace seen things. "When there is no hope, the soul says, I have loved strangers, and after them I will go." Despondency cuts the sinews of the traveller through the world, and will quickly cause him stop.

Lastly, Look to them, so as to overlook and put on a holy disregard of the things that are seen. And this brings me,

IV. To shew how we must overlook and put on a holy disregard of the things that are seen. The seen things are the things of this world. We cannot avoid seeing them while we are in it. But we must not look at them, we must see them as if we saw them not, and put on a holy disregard of them. They may be reduced to two heads. The evil and the good things of the world.

1. Put on a holy disregard of the evil things of the world, which tend to divert you from your Christian course. This world was and ever will be a *weary land* to the travellers to Zion. You must go into the world, and I tell you before, that there is an ill air blowing in it, which none of us shall ever be able to correct; and the more we set our faces heaven-ward, the more it will blow upon us. But we must resolve to be forward, and take it as we find it.

Put on then a holy disregard of the seen evil things of the world, such as its crosses and tribulations. These we must both see and feel, for in the world *we shall have tribulation*. But mind your Lord and Master who set his face to the storm, and being resolved to be forward, put on a holy contempt of it. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." And indeed we will need to have our foreheads steeled with holy resolution, when going through the world. For we may lay our account with having a cross for every day. Every day will have the evil thereof. The follower of Jesus must take up his cross *daily;* and the clouds will return after the rain. We may meet with these,

where we least expect them, perhaps by the time we enter our own houses, we will see one ready shapen out for us, and we must take it up. We may lay our account also with what may be called holy-days' crosses, the day of Zion's distress and persecution, or public calamity. "Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about; so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I had swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed." Ever since the Christian race was opened, Satan hath raged against those that have set out in it. He hath set up reproaches, poverty, blood and slaughter in it, to drive people from it. And he wants but to have his chain lengthened, and the enemy would begin the bloody work as keenly as ever.

But happy they, who, though they see this evil of worldly crosses, do not look at them, but put on a holy disregard of them. That is, do not pore upon them, for often while one muses that way the fire burns. And the cloud, which in itself is but like a man's hand, by a faithless looking at it, increases till it appears to blacken the very heavens. Do with them as a man on his journey, who meets with a mire or rugged step, he cannot avoid seeing it, but he must not stay to look at it, especially in a place where all around is mire. It is remarkable of Jacob, that when Rachel named the child of which she died, *Benoni*, the son of my sorrow, *but his father called him Benjamin;* the son of my right hand; near and dear and precious to him as his right hand.

Do not terminate your view upon your crosses, but look beyond them to the bright side of the cloud. If the mist of trouble rise before you in the way, look through it to the unseen things before you and press forward. Some professors are like delicate persons that go abroad in a fair hour to take the air; but whenever a shower comes on they wrap themselves up in their cloaks, and return to their houses. Their religion endures till they meet with a cross: and then they take such a look of their cross, as drives them at once out of all the little wisdom which they ever had in religion; "For having no root in themselves, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." But be you like one who is travelling on necessary business, he cannot command the clouds, but he looks to his business; and be it fair or foul weather he must be forward.

You must also put on holy contempt of the world's way, which must be reckoned among its evil things. If you design for heaven, you will soon see that the multitude are not going your way, and that their course is opposite to the one you must steer. "They walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince

of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Their way leads to things that are seen, but to none of the things that are unseen, except the wrath to come. They despise religion, the profane mock at it; worldly wise men gravely pronounce it folly. Every one of them disregards it and goes after his own way, any way, but God's way.

You will see all this, and behold it to mourn over and watch against it. But look not at it, to esteem, love, choose, or tamper with it. "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." Many look at it, so as that their eyes betray their hearts, they fall in with it; because they see it is the way that is most frequented, as if they thought it safe enough to go to hell with company. "But be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Therefore I would say to you as Peter did, *save yourselves* from this untoward generation. And remember that the separation to be completed at the last day, is begun and working now. *For thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.*

2. Put on a holy disregard of the world's good things also. This is necessary if ever you would go safe through the world, for its good as well as its evil things have a tendency to divert you from your Christian course. And the case is much the same, whether the world cudgel us to death with its blows, or hug us to death with its treacherous embraces. The fawning as well as the frowning world is dangerous, and we may say of it as Solomon does of wine. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Like Joab, the world pretends fair, while it gives a home thrust to the soul. Like the panther, which with the sweet smell of his breath draws other beasts to him, and then devours them.

The world will court you, with its profits, saying, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." And O what an ensnaring sight to many! "For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

The world thus prevails with many to take away their desire from the unseen things. "And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused." Men who are led by sense count nothing substantial good,

but what they can see with their eyes, or handle with their hands and which will improve their fields and fill their barns and coffers. These are the bird in hand, with them preferable to the unseen treasures of another world, that are but the bird in the bush in their esteem.

The world will court you also with its seen pleasures, that gratify the senses. "Even all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." O what a bewitching sight is this to many. And how many does it keep back from the Christian course. Hence if you will look through the world, you will see multitudes, plunged in the mire of sensuality, whose souls are sacrificed to please their flesh. They are bound over to death in these silken cords and ruined with these siren songs, that will be bitterness in the end.

And we are not only in danger by the unlawful, but also by the lawful comforts of the world. It is a sad but true observation, that many perish by lawful things. The inhabitants of the old world "were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, all lawful things, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. And knew not till the flood came and swept them all away." Two unhappy sons stole away the heart of good Eli; and the gourd of a night, the heart of the prophet Jonah.

But look not at the world's seen good, if ever you would get safe through it. Do not tamper with its unlawful profits or pleasures. Check the first side look of the heart after them, the first rising of strong desire to them, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. They that begin to look at them are in the fair way to leap over the hedge for them. The fort is near to surrender that comes to a parley. And they that parley with temptations can hardly ever come fair off.

Make not the world's seen good your main scope and aim, you need the world's comforts in this state of mortality, and God requires as well as allows us, "To provide things honest in the sight of all men." But let your great view be beyond the clouds, and be not seekers of the world, but seekers of the kingdom of God. And you may know your case in this point by this mark. That is your main view, to which your other views are made to yield. If you manage in seen good, so as may best suit the advancing of your enjoyment of the unseen good; then it is well.

You must also moderate your affections to the seen good of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Let not your hearts sink deep among these ensnaring good

things, but go lightly over them. Loose reins given to the affections even in lawful things, may soon give you a miserable fall. The way through the best of this present world is slippery, and there is need to keep a good bridle hand. The boundaries betwixt lawful and unlawful things are so very small, that it is difficult to go to the utmost of what is lawful, without slipping into what is unlawful. For though the very edge of the rock be firm, yet our heads are too light to venture on it.

Finally, Undervalue and disregard the best things of the world in comparison of Christ. "If any man, says he, come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." When they come in competition with him, give up with them. When they stand in your way to him, tread over them, that you may get forward, and count them but dung that you may win Christ. It was the commendation of Levi, when seen things and unseen were in competition, he looked not at them; "Unto his father and mother, he said, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren; nor knew his own children."

For the improvement of what has been said,

1. You may see here, where your danger lies, in your course through this world. It is on the one hand in looking at things that are seen. These things will present themselves to your view, and strive to wind themselves into your affections. And the farther you launch into this deep, the more will you lose sight of Immanuel's land. Therefore take heed that you be not betrayed by the sight of your eyes, driven out of the way by the world's evil, or flattered out of it by its good things.

On the other hand your danger lies in losing sight of things not seen. We are apt to do so, and if we do not watch we cannot escape doing it. It is difficult to cause wet wood take fire, and as difficult to make it keep fire. And so carnal are our hearts, that it is difficult to get our eyes lifted up to look at the unseen things of another world, and when we have it, it is as difficult to keep the view. Therefore be upon your guard.

Use 2. For exhortation. Let me exhort you all as ever you would see heaven, so look to unseen things as to overlook the things that are seen.

Motives 1.—Consider the vast disproportion of the objects. Why should you not look at what is most worthy of your regard? Is the world, and all that is in it, to be laid in the balance with the favour and enjoyment of God? Can all the world's gain recompense the loss of the soul? I will give you only two views betwixt them that may shew the disproportion.

1. Seen things can never be truly satisfying, but unseen things are perfectly satisfactory to the soul. Seen things are not commensurate to the desires of the soul. If the world should cast all its best things into your bosom, would there not still be a want? "I have seen an end of all perfection." You have long squeezed the world for its sap, but did you ever yet come to say, it is enough? No, and you never will. For as a circle can never fill a triangle, so the world can never fill the heart of man. He was a fool that said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

But unseen things are perfectly satisfying. They are suited to the spiritual nature of the soul, and an infinite good is sufficient for the boundless desires of the soul. See what they are in time, Psal. iv. 7. "Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." See what they are in eternity, Psal. xvii. 15. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Therefore I would say, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

2. Seen things are but temporal, unseen things are eternal. The world's smiles and frowns will soon be over, but God's smiles and frowns will last for ever. Ere long this stage of vanity and misery will be taken down, but another scene will commence that will last for ever. Will you look forward to death, that will be the end of seen things to you. Look to the end of the world, that will be the end of them to all. But then the unseen things take place, never to give place to a change. Let me say then, Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away, as an eagle toward heaven.

Motive 2. Consider this is the way in which all the saints have gone to glory. "They walked by faith, not by sight." Had the fair ones now in heaven looked to what was seen, their carcases had fallen with others in the wilderness. But they had more noble views, "The prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They desired a better country, that is an heavenly." Thus the cloud of witnesses steered their course, and thus did the King of saints upon their head, "Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Motive 3. There is an unseen evil in the best things of the world, that afterwards comes to be severely felt. "But they that will be

rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts; which drown men in destruction and perdition." Since the curse was laid upon the earth, thorns and briers have not ceased to grow up with our greatest worldly comforts. Brethren! Why all this looking at seen things? Have you not found sometimes your greatest cross, where you looked for your greatest comfort? Have you not, sucking greedily at the dry breasts of the world, wrung out blood instead of milk? Have you not often been therein like one striking at a flinty rock for water, and got nothing but fire flashing in your faces.

4. Looking to the unseen things will help you on your way to Immanuel's land, whatever wind blow. This will make you easy, go the world as it will. He that while he has the world's good things does not stand by them, will stand without them when they are gone. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." This has made confessors take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and martyrs joyfully to embrace a stake or a gibbet.

5. If you look to the things that are seen, then seen things will be your portion. And when the turn of unseen things comes, you will get that cutting memorandum, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." You will never see the land that is afar off, otherwise than the rich man saw it in hell. And by the time you are in another world, the support which you have derived from the world's good things will be gone, and you will awake and find yourselves faint; but through eternity you shall not once taste the comforts of another world.

Lastly, If you overlook the things that are seen, and look at the things which are not seen, you shall not be disappointed. "For unto them that look for him shall Christ appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." What you look for now, you shall then fully enjoy, and be happy for ever, in being for ever with the Lord.

Directions.

1. Live much by faith. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The life is the soul's continual travelling betwixt Christ's fulness and self-emptiness.

2. Be much in prayer, so will you converse with the Lord of the unseen world, and about the unseen things of it.

3. Be much employed in reading the scriptures, for in them we have the account of the unseen things.

4. Be much given to meditation. Use stated meditations, and particularly I would recommend solemn secret fasting and humiliation. "And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart."

Lastly, Converse most as you have access, with those that are best acquainted with the unseen things and seem to have the savour of them most upon their spirits. And watch your hearts, that they slip not into a forgetfulness of things unseen, and return to a fondness for things that are seen. Amen.

Ettrick, June 24, 1716.

Sermons preparatory for the Lord's Supper.

CHRIST DEMANDING ADMISSION INTO SINNERS' HEARTS.

SERMON VIII.

PSALM XXIV. 9.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

THIS psalm is judged to have been composed when David brought up the ark from the house of Obed Edom to mount Zion, 2 Sam. iv. chap. to be sung on that occasion, and others like it, particularly on the bringing of the ark into the temple, which was afterwards to be built, to which the Psalmist seems here, by the spirit of prophecy, to have a special reference.

The ark was a type of Christ, and so this psalm concerns him. The sum of it is, that though all the world be the Lord's, yet the church is his in a peculiar manner; for there, and in his people, he dwells and all ought to receive him. It was sung by the Jews ordinarily on the first day of the week, which is now the Christian Sabbath, and the matter of it is very agreeable to the Sabbath, being the day in which Christ solemnly demands admission into the hearts of the hearers of the gospel.

In the words there are two things.

1. Entrance solemnly demanded, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates.* Where consider, to whom the demand is directed. Some read the words, *Lift up your gates, O ye princes or heads.* (So the Vulgate.) Accordingly, some understand it of Christ's ascension into heaven, taking the gates for those of heaven, the princes for the angels. Others, namely, some Papists, understand it of Christ's descending into hell, taking the gates for those of hell, the princes for the devils. But as there is no ground for this reading, the interpretation as built upon it falls to the ground.

The demand is figuratively directed to the gates, a thing very natural in a joyful solemnity, especially in a song. But the Ark, Tabernacle, and Temple being all typical, this doubtless, has a compound sense, literal and mystical.

Literally, by the gates are meant, the gates of the temple, which though it was not built in David's time, yet it was designed to be built, on the place to which the ark was now brought, namely in the mount. Everlasting doors they are called, because the temple was a fixed dwelling for the ark, whereas the tabernacle was removed from place to place.

Mystically, the temple was a type of heaven, and if on this account these words be applied to Christ's ascension, (so several of the Fathers understand them) I will not contend. But it was also a type of the church, and the ark's dwelling in the temple was the symbol of the divine presence among the Jews. And so by the gates are meant the hearts of sinners to whom the gospel comes, according to that, Rev. iii. 20, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." These are the everlasting doors, both because of the immortality of the soul, and because when Christ once comes into them he never departs. This was aimed at in that call at the entrance of the ark, for there is not a word here of the ark, but *of the King of glory.* Namely, that, as they received the ark into the temple, so they should open their hearts to receive Christ into their souls.

The thing demanded is, "that the gates lift up their heads, also that the everlasting doors be lifted up." From top to bottom they must be thrown wide open that there may be a spacious entrance. This for the greater solemnity, in the bringing of the ark. It indicates a most hearty willingness in embracing of Christ and receiving him into the soul. It is expressed two ways. The first seems to belong to saints who are to be active in it. Lift up your heads, O ye gates! Do it of your own accord, willingly, for our Lord will not force his entrance. But in the day of his power he can make

the iron gates fly open. Accordingly the second seems to belong to sinners, who are passively to be lifted up. For sinners cannot open their own hearts, but a power goes along with the command.

The demand is made literally by the priests, who bare the ark into the temple; mystically, by the ministers of the gospel, who are sent to demand access for their Master into the hearts of sinners; or whatever instrument our Lord uses to prepare his way.

The demand is doubled. To shew Christ's willingness and earnestness to get admission. It also intimates the aversion of sinners to admit him, and the vast importance and consequence of the matter.

2. The person for whom admission is demanded. It is for the *King of glory*. He is a King, even King Jesus, typified by the ark. It is a solemn entry such as a king makes in state into a city. He comes in, not only a guest to abide with sinners, but as a King to rule all. He is not only a King, but "the King of glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." He is a glorious King in himself, and the purchaser of eternal glory for his people. The first is here chiefly meant.

Assurance is given that he will enter if admitted. The gates shall not be opened for nought. He will not stand without, unless he be kept out. He is represented as a victorious King making a triumphant entry.

Doctrine 1. Where the ark of gospel ordinances comes, Christ himself comes to the door of the hearts of sinners for admission. The ark's coming to the temple is the King of glory's coming to the hearts of sinners. Now there is no more an ark, but gospel ordinances have succeeded it and have the same use. And this is the call to go along with them to the end of the word.

In speaking from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Inquire what is the ark of gospel ordinances.

II. How Christ comes along with this ark to the doors of the hearts of sinners.

I. We are to inquire what is the ark of gospel ordinances. The ark was the most holy of all the Old Testament ordinances. It was the chief thing in the most holy place, where God was in a special manner present, *sitting between the cherubims*. From this place he gave answers, and on that account the most holy place was called the oracle. The place for the ark, was *the oracle of the house*, the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. From this we may gather that there are two things which may come under the name of the gospel ark.

1. The word read and preached. The holy scriptures are *the oracle of God.* From them we have a clearer discovery of the mind of God, than what was given from the Jewish ark. And the gospel, as purely preached, after the reformation from popery, is called the appearing of the ark of his testament. "For the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of the testament."

2. The holy sacrament, baptism and the Lord's supper. These are really sacred symbols of the divine presence as truly as ever the ark was. Some divines say, the ark was called Jehovah, Num. xvi. 35. But that is certainly too much. It is God himself *whose name alone is Jehovah.* The greatest honour put upon it in the scripture seems to be in these words of Joshua, "Behold, said he, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan." But as to the sacrament of the supper, it is nothing short whatever it be more. This, said our Lord, "is my body broken for you. And this cup is the new testament in my blood."

Consider, that wherever the ark came, the places were made holy. *The places*, said Solomon, are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come. And what are the means of bringing holiness into any place of the unholy world, but the word and sacraments. These bring light into the dark places of the earth, and set up a kingdom for Christ, where the devil had ruled all before. The ark was the special dwelling place of God upon earth. *He dwelt between the cherubims*, which overshadowed the ark, and it was that by which he communicated himself to his people. And these ordinances are the places of his special presence, from which he conveys his counsels, comforts, and graces, to his people. His people's experience confirms this. "The king is held in the galleries." We are now,

II. To inquire how Christ comes along with this ark, to the doors of the hearts of sinners.

1. In the word, Christ comes in the offer of himself to sinners. Wherever the gospel is preached, Christ is offered to sinners with all his saving benefits. "Behold, says he, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me." A market of free grace is opened and whosoever will, is invited to buy without money and without price. There are some places where the market is not yet opened. Christ is not yet in their offer. There are other places where the market is over, and the despisers of the gospel in these are now gone to their place. But yet with us the market is still open, and Christ comes to the door of our hearts for admission.

2. In the sacraments Christ is exhibited. There is not a simple

offer of him, as one may have of meat, which he sees not, as in the word. But in them he is held forth to us, as meat set down upon a table before a man, to eat, and welcome. "Take, eat, this is my body broken for you." And does he not come near us then? He was sacrificed on the cross, and in the supper the sacrifice is presented to the guests to feed upon spiritually.

3. Both in word and in sacraments he demands admission. He comes not to look at the door, but stands and knocks for admission, as one that would have access. He would be admitted even into the place where the strong man keeps house alone. He would be admitted farther where he has had some access before. Saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." For as we must always be coming to Christ, so always opening, and opening, wider and wider, till he possess not only the whole man, but possess him wholly without any rivals.

And thus you may see the truth of this point manifested. The ministers of the gospel coming with the Lord's message to sinners, drive not an empty chariot. For saith Jesus to them, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He speaks by them, and so the great business of salvation is transacted between Christ and sinners.

Use for information.

Is it so, that where the ark of the gospel ordinances comes, Christ comes to the door of sinners' hearts for admission? Then,

1. Seeing we have the ark of gospel ordinances amongst us, be it known unto you, that Christ himself is come to the doors of your hearts for admission. Many do not consider, nor believe that Christ is knocking at the door of their hearts for admission, and therefore they do not bestir themselves to receive him. But believe it, it is no fancy, but the most certain reality, and therefore I say to you and to each of you: "To you is the word of this salvation sent." Will you consider for the reality of it, that there is no salvation without receiving Christ into our hearts. "Which is Christ in you the hope of glory." He must dwell in all those now, who shall dwell with him for ever. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Where there is no union with Christ, there can be no communion with him. And where there is no communion with him, there can be no holiness, no grace, no peace, no pardon, no happiness.

As we cannot receive him unless he offer himself unto us, so for what end are ordinances, if Christ come not to us in them, offering himself to us. The way in which Christ dwells in the hearts of his

people, is by his spirit and by faith. Now the ordinances are the channels in which the conveyance of his Spirit is made. "This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" The ordinances also are the means of begetting and of increasing faith. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If then they be the means of uniting us to Christ, he really comes in them for entrance into our souls.

But farther, it is so real, that men will be really saved by embracing Christ coming in to them by the ordinances, and really damned for slighting him, coming to them in these. Jesus *said to his disciples*, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He that cannot see Christ in gospel ordinances, to close with him, will never see him to his comfort in another world. Who are they that will be owned by him at the last day? "Those that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. For it hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." And who are they that will be disowned by him at the last day? those who are without hope for another world. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

2. The word and sacraments coming to a place, will highly aggravate the condemnation of those that do not receive Christ into their hearts. For where they come, there he is, whether he be received or not. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Many a time the ordinances seem to be in vain, and preaching in vain, but they are not so. Be their success what it will, God's work is still going on for his honour at the long run. "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The ordinances will always be doing good to some. "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" And as many as are ordained to eternal life shall believe. Where Christ lights a candle we may suppose there are

some lost pieces to be found. Where Christ covers a table, there will readily always be some of his children to feed.

As for others, neither will they be in vain. Where the ark comes, the call is given, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates*, and those that keep their hearts still shut against Christ, are hereby rendered inexcusable, and their condemnation aggravated. Their sin will be the greater, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." The more frequent, and the more solemn offers that are made to sinners, the greater is their contempt which they pour upon the Son of God. And every sermon and every communion will add to their account; so that I doubt not but many of us, if they hold on as they are doing in slighting Christ and his ordinances, the day will come, in which they will wish from their hearts, that they had never lived where sermons and communions were to be heard and seen. And reflections on these will cut them to the heart for ever more.

Their condemnation and punishment will be greater. "But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." In solemn appearances of the ark of God among his people great things have been done in the experience of some. But that makes a heavy reckoning to those who have no part nor lot in that matter; that keep their hearts shut against Christ, while others are opening to him. Of all vengeance that which follows a despised gospel is the most dreadful. The fire that breaks out from the altar burns the most vehemently.

Use second, of Exhortation.

Seeing you have the word preached and expect the sacrament to be administered, remember that these are the gospel ark, by which Christ comes to the hearts of sinners demanding admission.

1. Do not idolize the ark, but look beyond it to Jesus Christ, to whom the ark directs you. This was the sin of the Israelites when they brought the ark into the camp, in order that it might defend them from their enemies. 1 Sam. iv. 3. They thought that though they did not reform, and repent, yet if they had the ark all would be well. But they were deceived. Their unrepented of sins made them fall, and the ark could not hold them up. So many please themselves in taking Christ's livery, though they still remain Satan's slaves; in sitting down at the Lord's table though strangers to communion with him; in getting a token from men and mixing themselves with the saints, though they have no token from the Master of the feast. And so they cry, the temple of the Lord, the temple

of the Lord are these! But O what will this avail them? The Lord "will say to them, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

Look you then beyond the ark. Come into the inner court. Be not satisfied with less than opening your hearts to receive the Lord of the ark. Look beyond the sign to the thing signified, and pursue that. Break through the shell, that you may come to the kernal. Otherwise you neither answer the voice of Christ, nor the voice of your own necessities.

2. Do not undervalue the ark, but highly prize it. That was Michal's sin. 2 Sam. vi. 14. And it is the sin of many amongst us this day, who will have nothing to do with the ark themselves, and if it be in their power will be heavy to others that meddle with it. They pour contempt upon the memorial of Christ's death, and one communion after another passeth, but they will not meddle with it, as if they were not concerned. But if they can discern a fault in the conduct of a communicant, they will do it. They will despise them on account of it, and the ordinance for them? But O! prize the ark of the gospel ordinances. It is the most precious thing in the lower world; and I dare say a gracious soul would rather part with the sun out of the firmament, than the ark of gospel ordinances, word and sacraments. For the tables of the law were laid up in the ark. In these ordinances is to be seen by the Christian the most joyful sight out of heaven. The broad law fully answered in all its demands by Jesus Christ, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The fiery law with all its curse and vengeance originally due to him, laid by and covered up, under the vail of the flesh of Christ crucified.

Again, from the mercy seat on the ark, God spoke to the people. And in these ordinances God breathes love, peace, and good-will to poor sinners through a crucified Saviour. "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men." He who believingly sees the body and blood of Christ exhibited in the sacrament, must thereupon say with joy, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." There the believer hears the joyful invitation from a crucified Saviour, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone."

The pot of manna also was in the ark. And in gospel ordinances

the believer eats angels' food; for Christ, the true manna, the bread from heaven, is there, saying, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man shall eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Christ the maker of the feast, is the matter of it too, and feasts his people on himself and all his benefits. And O how desirable must this entertainment be in the wilderness of this world, while the believer tastes of Christ's sweetness, and the sweetness of every thing in him; the sweetness of his death that removes the curse, and his resurrection that fills with the hope of glory.

Great and glorious things were done by the ark. When the ark was placed beside Dagon, Dagon fell to the ground. When Christ is enjoyed in gospel ordinances, strong lusts and idols are made to fall. The death of Christ viewed by faith in the sacrament, is the best remedy for subduing strong corruptions. By compassing Jericho the walls fell. O how often have walls of separation between Christ and a believer fallen down at ordinances, and they that were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Jordan was divided by the ark and they went through to Canaan. And indeed the enjoyment of Christ in ordinances, will take the sting out of death and present to the man a safe passage to Immanuel's land.

3. Beware of profane looking into the ark, but approach with all holy reverence. Fifty thousand, threescore and ten men of Bethshemesh were slain by the Lord for this sin, 1 Sam. vi. 19. How many such on-lookers are there in the case of the gospel ark, who look to the sacred symbols as common things, and despise the holy mystery of Christ represented by them. External judgments were more common under the law, but spiritual judgments are more common now. Silent blows on the soul and conscience that make no noise now abound. But labour you to see a majesty in the ordinances, and serve God therein with reverence and godly fear.

4. Beware of rash meddling with the ark. Remember that for this sin Uzzah was struck dead by God, 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. O the hazard of rash approaching to the table of the Lord. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Therefore make it a business of solemn seriousness to examine yourselves, as to your right to it, your state and your frame. For it is a feast for friends, not for enemies; for the living, not the dead, for those that are awake, not such as are asleep.

5. Prepare for the entertaining of the ark, and the Lord of the ark. Do as David did. "I will not, said he, give sleep to mine

eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." Labour to prepare for the solemn ordinance before you. Let it be much in your mind, that you may be in a proper frame for it. Lay salvation to heart. Renew your covenant and put away strange gods. Search and purge out the old leaven. Satan uses to be very busy at such a time, and therefore you should watch and be sober.

Lastly, Throw the doors of your hearts wide open to receive the Lord of the ark. Let all things be dismissed that have kept Christ at the door, and heartily embrace him in the gospel offer.

Doctrine 2. The doors of the hearts of sinners ought to be thrown wide open to Christ the King of glory, demanding admission by the gospel. Here I shall

I. Shew what is supposed in the gospel call here given.

II. What it is to open the doors of the heart to Christ.

III. Offer some reasons why sinners should open to him. I am

I. To shew what is supposed in the gospel call here given. It supposeth,

1. That the hearts of sinners are naturally shut on the King of glory. Whoever be shut in, Christ is shut out. "For behold, says he, I stand at the door and knock:" God made man with an heart open towards heaven, into which his Spirit might have ready access. But man receiving God's enemy, they together shut the door, and shut out the great Master. And in this case Christ finds every man's heart when he comes before it in the gospel.

2. That man naturally keeps his heart shut against Christ. As long as the sinner is left to himself he will never relent. "I hearkened and heard but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying what have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." He will not open the door, and go and seek the King of glory. He will not sit at the door and espy Christ afar off, as Abraham did the angels, and run to meet him and invite him to come in. Alas! It is much if he will give him admission, when he comes to the door and demands once and again.

3. Christ comes by the gospel and demands open doors for himself. He could by a word have set the house on fire, as soon as it was shut on him, and might have justly done it. But he graciously condescends to demand entrance, so the proposals of peace begin on his side. He sends messengers to put sinners in mind to return to their duty. And O that you could be persuaded that Christ is demanding admission into every heart among us.

4. Christ is willing to come into every heart. Why does he de-

mand open doors, but because he is willing to enter. Though the house be not worthy of his presence, though he has received many indignities from it and in it, yet he is willing to grace it with his royal presence. He makes no exceptions in the offer, and none are excluded from his favour, but those who by refusing his gracious offer exclude themselves. "For if any man, says he, hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me."

Lastly, That Christ will not come in but with the sinner's consent. He will not break up the door. He will be King of the hearts of his subjects, and rule in their affections, or not at all. They must open to him, he will not force himself in upon them. He makes them willing in the day of his power, but will not enter against their will. We proceed now,

II. To shew what it is to open the doors of the heart to Christ.

This is the great duty for which the text calls, and what we are called to on this occasion. There is a two-fold opening.

1. Initial opening. That is when those that never opened to Christ before, do open to him in their conversion, and their first believing and coming into the covenant. Then Christ makes his first solemn entry into the soul. And thus sinners, natural men, are called to open.

2. Progressive opening. So saints open to him. To them Christ says, "Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with drops of the night." This is an opening more and more to the King of glory. Sometimes though the soul be open to Christ in respect of one's state, yet it is closed in respect of the frame. Though there be grace yet it is either not in exercise at all, or weak and languishing. Yea, grace at best while here is but imperfect. Though Christ has room in the heart, yet he has not all the room, and therefore there must be a progressive opening, till we come to the place, where Christ shall not only have the whole man, but the whole of every part of the man without competition.

The text seems to aim at both, and so to take in both saints and sinners. The work of conversion is imperfect in respect of degrees, and so must be carried on to perfection. And indeed the lines of God's image drawn at first on a soul, are sometimes like a new written sentence, which rashly touched by any thing, is so defaced, that though the letters be not quite blotted out, yet it must be run over anew with the pen. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." There must be new coviction, humiliation, believing and covenanting.

There is a twofold door to be opened to Christ.

1. You must open the outer door of the understanding. Open the eyes of the mind blinded by the deceitfulness of sin. "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness unto light." Have we not, like Samson, fallen into the hands of the Philistines, who have put out our two eyes and sport themselves with our miseries? Are not the eyes of many closed, so as they see neither their danger, nor the means of deliverance, neither their disease, nor the remedy.

You must open your eyes to see your sinfulness, to take a right view of your sins. "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." Without this view there will be no access for the King of glory into our hearts. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see." See your heart, what it is, a cage of unclean birds, a sepulchre full of rottenness, a receptacle of filthy lusts, a piece of cursed ground, fruitful of briers and thorns. "For, from within, out of the heart, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it." See your life what it is, a mass of disorder and confusion, unfruitful, unprofitable, dishonouring to God, grieving to his Spirit, leading to utter darkness.

See the evil of your sins. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts." See how contrary sin is to the holy nature of God. "Thou Lord art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." It is contrary to his holy law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." See how sin dishonours all his attributes, omniscience, omnipresence, justice, truth, holiness, and the rest. How provoking to the eyes of his jealousy. See also the loathsomeness of your sins. Pull off the mask which Satan hath put upon sin and view it in its own ugly colours; how the beauty of your souls is thereby marred, the image of God defaced, the image of Satan set up in its stead. How it unfits you for communion with God, as one in his vomit is

unfit to approach the presence of a prince. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations. Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee! I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

See to the heinousness of your sins. What light, love, mercies of many kinds you have sinned against. What reproofs and warnings you have disregarded.—What vows, purposes and resolutions to amend you have broken. "I will arise, said the prodigal, and go to my father and will say to him, I have sinned against heaven and before thee."

Lastly, See the multitude of your sins. "Who can understand his errors." They are more than the hairs on your heads. The longer you have lived, the more is your debt increased. The law requires all perfection at all times; but you could never do one thing, which weighed in balance of the law would not have been found light. Whatever you have done, with so many sins you are chargeable; thoughts, words, actions; yea, more, inasmuch as there have been many sins in one action. Omissions too, who can reckon them up?

Again, Open your eyes to see your misery by sin. What miseries has it brought upon you and to what it has made you liable. Has it not separated between God and you, kindled the Lord's anger against you, displayed by temporal and spiritual plagues upon you. Has it not marred your communion with God, and prevented the communications of gracious influences, and left you a withered soul? Who can express the misery of a person out of Christ. Poor soul! thou art a condemned man. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Being under the fearful sentence of a broken law, every moment ready to drop into the pit, having nothing but the thread of thy brittle life betwixt thee and everlasting burnings.

See also your utter inability to help yourselves, by yourselves. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: but in me is thine help." Such a sight the prodigal got, "I perish, said he, with hunger." Look to your crimson guilt, and you will see it to be of a deeper dye than that tears of blood can wash it out. Look to the power of thy lusts, and see thy slender arms utterly unable to break them; thyself as unable to grapple with them, as a little child with a giant, or a weak man with the leviathan that will count his darts as straw, and his spear as flax.

Lastly, Open your eyes to see a Saviour in the glory of his mediatory office. "Look, says he, unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." You have

long been saying, "what is thy beloved more than another beloved?" You have shut your eyes that they could not behold his glory. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." But open the outer door, and see the King of glory, that being ravished with the sight, you may open the inner door also and make him welcome to the innermost recesses of your heart. See him, in the glory of his suitableness to your case. If thou art blind, he hath salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see; if thou art naked, he hath white raiment to clothe and adorn you; if thou art poor, he hath gold tried in the fire that will enrich thee for ever. "He is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." If thou be a poor foolish creature he is wisdom. If thou be hungry his flesh is meat indeed. There is a fulness of merit in him and of the Spirit. Whatever be thy want, there is a suitable supply in him. If there be a curse on thee, he knows the way of removing the curse, and he hath a blessing to bestow. View him also in the glory of his ability to save. "He is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Though your sin and misery were heavier than the sand of the sea, a dead weight of guilt hanging at thy soul like mountains of brass, yet hear the Father's testimony concerning him, "I have laid help, saith he, upon one that is mighty." He is God as well as man, and therefore though the controversy be betwixt God and you, he is fit to be Day's-man, to lay his hands upon both. The virtue of his blood is infinite, because it is the *blood of the Son of God, and it cleanseth from all sin.* So the virtue of his Spirit, because he is a divine person.

See the glory of his willingness to save. His whole word is full of demonstrations of this. "Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Yea, he has written his willingness to save in characters of his blood, having laid down his life to save sinners, and made even them welcome to the benefit who embrued their hands in his blood. Even to them, it was said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Does he not stand stretching out his hands, crying, Behold me, behold me.

2. You must open the inner door of the will. Be willing and obedient to the call of the gospel. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, ye men of Judah and

inhabitants of Jerusalem." There is an iron sinew in our neck, that must be renewed, that we may bow to him, to whom every knee shall bow at length. Whatever light hath entered into the mind, Christ hath no possession of the soul till the heart and affections become pliable to him. This inner door Satan keeps fast as well as the other, till a day of power cause them to open, Psal. cx. 3. So the sinner may say to Christ laying siege to his heart, as the Jebusites said to David in another case, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither:" the blind mind, and the crooked will. But exhortations and gospel calls are the means, which he blesseth for that end; therefore we call upon you to open this door also. Open the door then, in a hearty acquiescence in the grand device of salvation through Jesus Christ, "who is the power of God and the wisdom of God." This is God's contrivance for bringing many sons to glory. Let your own hearts say amen to it, so as to venture your souls upon that foundation, upon which God has laid the weight of his glory. Be well pleased with the King of glory. Do not any more find fault with him, with whom the Father is well pleased. Listen no more to the surmises of unbelief against him: for it is ever finding some fault with the mystery of Christ. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in him.

You must open also in a hearty willingness, to part with all your old guests to make room for him. There is not an empty heart among all the children of men. If Christ be not there, there are others in his stead. But be they who they may, Christ says, if you love me, let these go their way.

Away then with your carnal wisdom, that room may be made for Christ's guidance of you by his word and Spirit. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths." Shut up the eyes of self-wisdom, that you may walk in his light. Following that false light has led you into many a snare in the wilderness of the world. The following of it has made the ship of the soul dash on many a rock in this troublesome sea.

Away also, with all your false and self-confidences before the Lord, that room may be made for the blood of Christ, the only procuring cause of peace, pardon, and salvation. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Depend no more upon mere mercy before the

Lord, nor to your good hearts, blameless lives, your duties, or any thing that is yours. But as the young man, leave all these and flee from them naked, Mark xiv. 51, 52. Pretend to nothing to recommend you to God, or Jesus Christ, nothing in or about yourselves.

Away with your lusts and idols, that the King of glory may reign freely in your hearts. "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." Whatever room you reserve for lusts or idols you refuse to him. If you be not willing to part with them all, you are not willing to receive Christ. If there be a Delilah left that must be spared, a right eye, which you cannot endure the pain of plucking out, you do in effect judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

Again you must open in a hearty willingness to receive Christ as the gospel offers him. Take up the offer of the gospel rightly, and let your souls be ready to fall in with it. Come over all your objections to the marriage covenant, as contained in the offer. All things are ready on his part, be you so also. "All things, says he, are ready, come ye to the marriage." Will you be content at length to take him for your prophet, and only oracle and director; for your priest to bear the whole weight of your salvation on his merits; for your King and absolute Lord; to take his will for your law, to obey it without disputing.

You must open also in a cordial actual consent of the soul to Christ. "To as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." Now stretch out your hand to God in Christ in the everlasting covenant. You that never before could be brought to be espoused to the Son of God, now throw open the doors that the King of glory may come in. You that have formerly given but a hypocritical consent of hand, but not of heart, give now a cordial consent. Take him for your Lord, head and husband, for a covering of the eyes, for all in all. And you that have honestly consented before, renew it with more cordiality, as those that have seen how good the Lord is.

You must open in a cordial resignation of yourselves to the Lord, giving up yourselves to him wholly, and that for ever. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Long has the Lord been calling to us, saying, my son, give me thine heart. O then give your ownselves unto the Lord. You have endured a long siege, O then yield yourselves. "Now, be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord and enter his

sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever; and serve the Lord your God." The devil, the world and the flesh are his competitors in this matter, to the one, or to the other you must belong. But shall any be reckoned preferable to the King of glory. You must open in a cordial love to him. O stir up in your souls a flaming love to the King of glory. That was a blessed opening when the disciples exclaimed, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Love him for his benefits to the children of men, for the peace, pardon, grace and glory, which he hath purchased by his blood, and bestows upon his people. Love him, for himself, his glorious perfections, his holiness, love, grace. Love him for what he hath done for sinners in obeying the law and for what he hath suffered by enduring the penalty. Look at him striking hands with the Father from eternity for an elect world, and love him. Look to him in his birth, his life, his death, in the garden, on the cross, and love him.

Finally, Open in your fervent desire after communion with him. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." This is the native effect of opening of the heart to him in love. "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death." An opened heart will have holy breathings after the Lord. "O that I knew where I might find him, then I would go even to his seat." If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, long for more of the communications of his grace. If not, yet if you have heard and believed, it may excite your ardent desire.

Thus we must open to Christ. And not only so, but we must open the door wide. The heads of the gates must be lifted up to make a large wide entry. You may take up this in these things.

1. There must be room made to take in all that our Lord brings along with him. We must not choose and refuse in this according to the disposition of our own hearts; like those who would take something of his, but have not room for taking in all. Open the door then so as to take in his broad law with him. If you have exceptions against any of his commandments, if there be any particular with which you have no will to comply, you receive him not. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." You must open so as to take in his cross with him. "If any man will come after me, said Jesus, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." If you be not content to take Christ with his cross, to follow him at all hazards whithersoever he goes, you cannot receive him. Many have room for Christ's salvation from hell and wrath, but they never open so as to receive him with his law and his cross.

2. There must be room made that our Lord may enter in what way seems best in his own eyes. We must not limit him, for he is the holy one of Israel. In respect of time we must set no hours to him, but wait on, till the Lord look down from heaven; nor must we limit him in respect of the manner of his coming, but whether he come in the high way of consolation, or the low way of further humiliation, we must welcome him. Nor in respect of the measure of enjoyments, we must be thankful for the least crumb.

3. We must be always endeavouring to have the entrance enlarged. To get more sense of sin, farther insight into the Mediator's glory: more willingness to part with sin, more love, faith, desire, and the like. For the mystery of iniquity in us, the mystery of the Mediator's glory, are depths into which we may penetrate farther and farther. And whatever graces are kindled in the heart may be blown up to burn more keenly.

4. We must receive him honourably, as the King of glory making his triumphant entrance into our souls. A high esteem of Christ in his superlative excellency is necessary in order to the receiving of him.

Lastly, We must receive him joyfully, as citizens casting open their gates to receive their king with joyful acclamations, when making a triumphant entrance. Let us proceed,

III. To give a few reasons of the point.

1. Because, The house is his own. He is the righteous Lord and owner, and how unreasonable is it, that the house should be open to strangers and shut upon the Master. The visible church is Christ's house, and his entertainment there is in the hearts of the members of it. "I brought him, says the spouse, into my mother's house, and into the chambers of her that conceived me." He has a right to it, by the Father's gift, who has made him heir of all things, and by redeeming the house by his own blood, when it was mortgaged. Is it not then highly reasonable to receive him?

2. The Father that gave him the house, requires you to open it to him. "This said he, is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." He comes not without his Father's commission to take possession. He served his Father in the great work of man's redemption, and having been obedient to the death, the doors of heaven were opened to receive him triumphantly, and the doors on earth charged to open to him, for the reward of his obedience.

3. It was solemnly made over to him in your baptism. There are none of us but are baptized Christians, by which we were engaged to be the Lord's. Thus his name is upon us, as our proprietor by consent. And if we refuse to open to him, we do in effect declare,

that we will not stand to the bargain made for us in our infancy. And truly this is the language of the practice of many.

The Improvement.

Use 1. Of reproof to those that will not open to Christ.

1. Those that do not so much as open the outer door to him. The gross ignorance of many, in the midst of gospel light, holds Christ at the door. They live in darkness and will not use means to obtain light. The door was never yet opened by conviction of their sin and misery; but they have still lived in darkness and deep security. You are slighters of the Saviour. "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour. Jesus will be revealed in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Those who though the outer door has been opened, yet keep the inner door shut fast. How many are there, who do not want competent knowledge, and have had light conveyed into their minds by piercing conviction; yet alas! they still stand out against the Lord. They see what they should do, but their hearts will not comply with it. Their lusts keep such fast hold of their hearts, that all their convictions are baffled. They rebel against the light, keep Christ at the door, and follow their lusts, with a witness against them in their own breasts. The more light, the heavier will their doom be. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

3. Those that will neither open themselves, nor suffer others to do it, so far as they can hinder. There are many who are agents for the devil, who themselves stand aloof from holy things, and discourage others who are beginning to seek after them; and do what they can one way or another to keep others from the covenant and true seriousness. "But woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

4. Those who pretend to open to Christ, but never open wide enough, so as the King of glory may come in. There is always some secret reserve in their closing with Christ, which spoils all. The door is not opened so as to receive Christ in all his offices. Hence instead of opening to him, he is in effect shut out, because they are not pleased with the covenant, as the Lord has made it; their heart is divided.

Lastly, Sleeping saints, continuing in their security notwithstanding his knocking. To them he says, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with drops of the night." They reply, I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? Such maltreatment our Lord often meets with even in the house of his friends, which must be so much the worse as those who give it are of a character distinguished from the rest of the world. "But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company."

Use second of Exhortation.

Cast the doors of your hearts open, and wide open, to the King of Glory. Behold he cometh in the preaching of the gospel and in the holy sacrament demanding admission into your hearts. Hold him no longer at the door, "but lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

To enforce this exhortation, I shall,

I. Point out some things which keep sinners from opening to Christ. And O! that they may speedily be removed.

1. They know not who demands admission. They know not the King of glory, and therefore they treat him rudely. Which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Before one open a door, the question is, who is there? Accordingly the question is proposed, *who is this King of glory?* Many will not be at any pains to enquire about him; they do not concern themselves with any that come to the door of their hearts that hear another than the hellish chap. Many propose the question, but like Pilate, they stay not for an answer. So they know him not, they have no desire to know him. If they knew him and their own need of him, they would invite him to come in. Ignorance and unacquaintedness with Christ are a strong bar to keep him out.

2. They cannot come to the door, the house is so filled with stuff. The woful world blocks up the way to the door, Luke xiv. 16,—20. This and the other worldly advantage calls them to look to it, that they may lose nothing. The pleasures of the world like syren songs arrest them. The cares of the world like a thicket entangle them; they cannot get forward. This weary earth interposes between them and the sun of righteousness; so his beams cannot reach them.

The clay-idol bewitches them, so as they have neither heart nor hand to open the door.

3. Their hands are so full within and they have so many crying about them that they cannot come to the door. They have so many hungry lusts to feed, still crying give, give, that either they cannot hear Christ knocking, or if they do, their lusts so hang about them, that they hold them fast. "They have loved strangers and after them they will go." Love to their lusts leaves them no room for their Lord. They love their disease, they value not the Physician. And so while they feed their lusts, they starve their souls.

4. They are afraid the house will be spoiled so they dare not open the door. It was an old engine of hell against the gospel. They cried, these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also. Sinners entertain Christ's message as Nabal did David's, 1 Sam. xxv. 11. Shall I give up with the ways of sin, which are so profitable and pleasant? Shall I be bound up to the strictness of a holy life, that I shall have no more liberty to do as I please? Therefore to keep what they have, they will not open to Christ.

5. The strong man keeps the house, and will not suffer them to go to the door. "They are in the snare of the devil, and taken captive by him at his will." While Christ speaks at the one ear, Satan speaks at the other; and he uses every possible mean to keep them from opening to Christ. Sometimes he will tell them it is too soon, and sometimes that it is too late to do it. If they begin to entertain thoughts of opening, he will exert himself and vex them with temptations, so as not having a spirit of resolution for Christ, they are obliged to give it over.

6. They think he is already received. As one is sometimes kept at the door upon this mistake, so Christ is shut out of the hearts of many by reason of delusion and self conceit. "They think themselves rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing." They are beyond opening to Christ, for they think that they have opened already. A dangerous case, which should put all of us to an impartial trial of ourselves, and to be doing in opening to Christ, as if nothing had ever yet been done.

Lastly, They are in bed and they cannot rise, Song v. 3. A soft sleep in the bed of sloth, keeps Christ long at the door with many. They have lost the taste and relish of spiritual things; they have fallen out of use of wrestling with God. They have put their hands in their bosom, and it grieveth them to bring them to their mouth.

II. I shall bring forward some motives to urge you to open. May they be effectual.

1. Consider who keeps the house, while Christ is kept at the door, "While a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." Who is this but Satan, God's enemy, and the usurper of his throne. And as is the master, so is the furniture of the house. It is replenished from hell with divers lusts, each of them as Egyptian taskmasters filling the sinners' hands with works of darkness, and never saying it is enough. And such will be the reward, shame and everlasting sorrow. That heart that should be a temple for God the Saviour, is a workhouse for Satan. Satan is "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

2. Consider who it is that asks admission. A King, even the King of glory. Let the dignity of the person command your reverence and readiness to open; who would shut his door on a crowned head? Behold the crowned King of Zion demanding entrance into your souls. If you ask, who is this King of glory? He is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Therefore resistance is in vain. It will but ruin the person who makes it. For he is a mighty King against whom there is no rising up. Behold the end his enemies will make. "These mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." For he will be the last on the field, and will see all his enemies turn their backs, with the devil that deceived them, and led them on to oppose him.

He is the Lord mighty in battle, therefore you need not say, you cannot open. Give him but your consent, do but cordially bid him welcome, and he will see to the work himself. "But when a stronger than the strong man shall come upon him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusteth, and divideth his spoils." He can make the iron gates open of their own accord. A touch of his hand upon the lock will make it give way. Your strongest lusts he can soon subdue and make them as weak as water, if you be but willing.

3. Consider how unworthy the house is of him. When Solomon had built a glorious temple for him, he said in holy admiration: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth. Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" How much more may we say so of our hearts, that naturally are a cage of unclean birds, a habitation of devils. O wonderful, that ever he should vouchsafe to knock at these doors, and to dwell in such a lodging. Dreadfully heinous then must be the sin of refusing him access.

4. Consider that yet he will come in, if you will open to him. Neither the majesty of the King of glory, nor the meanness of the

place which the sinner has to lodge him in, will keep them asunder, but only sinners refusing him access. He that has the upper house of heaven for his throne, will take the humble heart for his lower house. "For thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And if he come in, he will bring a troop of blessings with him, pardon, peace, grace and a title to glory. "He will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly."

5. This offer stood the King of glory dear. There is no such knocking at the door of the heart of fallen angels; because "Jesus took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." And neither would you have had this offer, unless the Son of God had taken upon him man's nature, and satisfied justice, so that now with the good will of justice, mercy may be extended to the rebels. He purchased his kingdom with his blood, and now he is demanding access to it. For this is the voice of the King of glory returning from the battle which he has fought for sinners; calling them to open the gates to let in the conqueror triumphantly. May we not then say, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation."

6. Remember the day will come, that you, to whom he now calls to open to him, will call to him to open to you. He *has the keys of hell and death:* And whom he sends there, none can keep back, and whom he keeps back, none can set forward. For he opens and none can shut, and he shuts and none can open. He carries the keys of heaven's gates, and gives answers to those that knock at the door. And how can you expect that he will admit you into heaven, if you will not now receive him into your hearts. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."

7. You have a very solemn call at this time. Christ is opening his heart to you now by his word, to bid you welcome; next day we have the prospect of his opening it to you in the sacrament. This is a special time, in which the ark of gospel ordinances comes to your gates. Beware of slighting the King of glory in such a solemnity. It is the solemnity of his espousals and his coronation too, the time in which some will in a special manner be espoused to him

and put the crown on his head. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him, in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." But a time of blessing to some proves a time of a withering curse to others. "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

8. Consider the offer will not last always. Our Lord stands and knocks, Rev. iii. 20. He does not sit down at the door but stands, which is a way going posture. He has nothing to do, but turn his back and be gone. And indeed patience when still abused, turns to fury at length. You have had many knocks, if you sit this, the next may knock your souls out of your bodies, and where are you then.

Lastly, There is no other way to be saved, but by opening to Christ. Thus it shall be well with you, but otherwise you sin against the remedy of Christ to your eternal ruin.

Say not it is too soon. Ah! Is it too soon to have the soul plucked as a brand out of the burning? Is there not a danger of delaying? The longer you be in coming unto Christ, the harder work will it be. Nay, who knows but the Lord may cease knocking at thy heart, and that by delaying thou mayst outlive thy day of grace. There were several with us last sacrament, who are now gone.

Say not it is too long to be done now. No, thou shalt yet be welcome, if thou be willing. There is no case so far gone as to be hopeless, that is put into Christ's hand. "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he had been dead four days. Jesus said unto her, said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" The stone that has lain long before the builder, and has been often rejected while others about it were taken up, may come at length to get a place in the building. *For yet there is room.* Our Lord often comes back, and washes them that were formerly overlooked. "For I will cleanse, says he, their blood, that I have not cleansed; for the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

But Oh! will ever the Lord come into such a heart as mine? Answer, our Lord makes no exceptions. "If any man, says he, will open the door, I will come in to him." This may encourage thee. Our Lord never finds any heart good, but makes it good. He comes in as a Physician, and therefore thy sickness will not drive him away. The more desperate the disease is, the greater is the glory of his grace. Christ can make a stepping stone of thy sinfulness and misery, by which to ascend to his throne.

Let me conclude with giving some advices to those that would open to, and receive him at his table.

1. Search the house. Set about the duty of self-examination. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Examine yourselves as to your state, frame, graces, sins, wants, resolutions and the like.

2. Labour to purge the house of the idols of jealousy. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Renew your repentance. See what have been the great hinderances betwixt Christ and you, and take them out of the way.

3. Be sure to keep in the fire, the holy fire of grace. Quench not the Spirit. Cherish every good motion. And if you have got any thing strive to keep it.

4. Put the key of your hearts in the Lord's hand. Commit your unruly spirits to him, in the way of believing, lest Satan catch the key and the King be shut out.

5. Have on your best clothes, the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness applied by faith. Put off also the old man which is corrupt, and put on the new man, with all the ornaments of the hidden man of the heart.

6. See you be at home. Let not your hearts be a seeking, wandering through the ends of the earth. But be deeply concerned about your own case.

Finally, See you be not in your beds, when he comes to the door, "And you say I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" But shake off security. Let your loins be girt and your lamp burning, that you may be ready to open to him when he comes. Amen.

Action Sermon at Ettrick, July 15, 1716.

CHRIST'S INVITATION TO HIS BRIDE.

SERMON IX.

SONG iv. 8.

Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

THIS world was never designed to be the fixed abode of the children of men, and therefore there was a restraint laid upon our first parents in paradise, as to the forbidden tree, shewing that they behoved to look to another world for their happiness. Man was once set fair on the way to the land where glory dwells, but he lost his way, and now poor sinners are found wandering on the mountains of vanity. The first Adam managed ill, and brought us into this condition. But behold, the second Adam came to gather the dispersed of Israel, and to lead them on their way to the better country. Hear his voice in the text, calling his people to leave the weary world and go homeward with himself.

The text is divided into two parts.

1. Christ's gracious call to his people to leave the world as mountains of vanity. And here is a double call which runs more emphatically in the original, thus, "With me from Lebanon, O spouse, with me come from Lebanon." In the first of these calls, observe the party to whom it is directed, namely to Christ's spouse. Those persons that are espoused to him by embracing him in the covenant. It is to be observed, that this is the first time that the church gets this name in this song. We read of the espousals before, chap. iii. 11. And here he begins to own the relation, for some special reason surely, which I conceive to be this, which may give us a just notion of the call. It was a custom among the Jews, that the Bridegroom took the bride out of the city into the fields, where they had their nuptial songs, and afterwards he brought her back again, leaning on him into the city to his father's house. To this custom there seems to be an allusion, chap. viii. 5. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" And here also in the text. And thus it is a call of Christ's bride to rise and come away with her Bridegroom to the city above to his Father's house. Observe also,

The place from which she is to come, *from Lebanon.* It was a goodly pleasant mountain. It was a part of the good land that is beyond Jordan, even *that goodly mountain and Lebanon.* It was an odoriferous place, Hos. xiv. 6. and so may well represent the smiling world, which yet is only a bulky vanity, a place where Christ's spouse must not think to take up her abode. Observe also the company offered her in her journey home, *with me,* it is the society of her Bridegroom and Lord. In the world she cannot expect to have communion with him continued with her. So far as the deceitful world gains upon her heart, she loses of her communion with Christ. The manner of the call merits attention. It is an abrupt and hasty expression, intimating her great danger in sitting still, that therefore she must come away quickly, not lingering, and that he was very earnest to have her as it were plucked out of the fire. In the second of these calls, observe Christ's glory and excellency proposed to counterbalance all the ensnaring glory of the world. *With me, come with me.* And therefore in the former clause the offer of his society is supposed sufficient to draw her heart from the world. The world's glory dazzles the eyes, and arrests the hearts, even of the Lord's people, till they see the transcendent glory of their Lord, and this looses them from it, and makes them willing rather to go with Christ, than to sit still in the world's embraces.

Again observe that the call is fully expressed. *Come with me from Lebanon.* Come is an engaging word. The success of the Romans in their wars was ascribed to the word of command, which their military officers used. It was not go, but *come.* And how justly may it be expected that the hearts of the Lord's people at the hearing of that word from their Lord and husband. If the way be steep and difficult, he orders them not to go alone. Whatever they leave for him, they shall have himself in its stead.

2. Christ's gracious call to leave the world as mountains of prey, dangerous mountains. Observe here another emblem of the world. It is represented by three other mountains, Amana, Shenir, and Hermon, which two last some think to be but two tops of one mountain. We read of the pleasant dew of Hermon, Psal. cxxxiii. and it is likely all these mountains were pleasant ones as well as Lebanon. But yet they were indeed dangerous, for the lions had their dens there, and the leopards their haunts there. And thus the world is a dangerous place to Christ's spouse. She is in hazard while in it. Even in the midst of worldly felicity, there are fearful snares. The lions' dens are expressed emphatically, to strike her with a horror of the place, that she may haste away.

Observe also the duty to which the spouse is called, that is to

look from them. This must be by an eye of faith, to look from these mountains to his Father's house, the sight of which would inflame her to go with him thither, even as Moses saw Canaan from Pisgah. It is surely a looking from them in order to leaving them: and indeed the word may signify to direct one's course, and this very word, Isa. lvii. 9. is rendered *thou wentest*, and implies a stateliness in going, agreeing well with the noble contempt of the height of worldly excellencies, arising in gracious souls, from their communion with their Lord in their way home.

Doctrine.—It is Christ's call to his bride, to come away home with him to his Father's house, from out of the deceitful and dangerous world.

For the illustration and improvement of this doctrine, I shall

I. Take notice of some things supposed in this kind call and invitation.

II. I shall explain this coming from the world.

III. I will shew the import of coming away with Christ from the world. I am then,

I. To take notice of some things supposed in this kind call and invitation to come away from out of the deceitful and dangerous world.

1. It supposeth that Christ's bride is yet in the world. She is not yet carried home to his Father's house, where the marriage is to be consummated. Our Lord in his prayer for himself and his people takes notice of this. "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee." Christ's bride is yet in a state of imperfection. Though brought out of Egypt, yet not come to Canaan, but still in the willderness.

2. Though she be there, and perhaps has been there many years since she was united to Christ, yet he has not forgot her, but kindly remembers her still, whatever she may think otherwise. "But Zion, said the Lord, hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." Neither distance of place betwixt the mountain of myrrh, and the mountains of vanity, nor length of time, wears out Christ's kindly remembrance of those who have once given themselves to him.

3. The world is not a place for Christ's spouse to rest in, she is in great danger there. The lions have their dens there, and leopards are ranging there. Though she must walk through it in her journey to Immanuel's land, she must not be much delighted with the deceit-

ful mountains that may please the eye, or lay herself down to be solaced with them, for she may get a fearful rising, as Samson did out of Delila's lap. The Philistines be upon thee.

4. Yet sometimes the foolish creatures lie down even among the lions' dens, and being charmed with the deceitful mountains is averse to come away. She hugs the serpent in her arms, not considering the sting, and like the silly dove, nestles where she has been many times robbed. "Ephraim is like a silly dove, without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." Perhaps when the soul first engaged with Christ, she could have been well pleased, there had been but one step betwixt the tent of the espousals and the marriage chamber in the Bridegroom's Father's house. But now that desire is away, she has taken up a dangerous lodging by the way, and can hardly be prevailed on to rise and open the door to her beloved, Song v. 3.

5. Our Lord takes notice of and is concerned for the soul's danger from the deceitful world. And therefore he cries with earnestness to come away. Though you sleep in dangerous places, *He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* He knows that there is danger in places in which our eyes can discern none; and he shews a concern that we may be delivered from it, and therefore he calls and excites us to come away from it. We proceed,

II. To explain this coming from the world, or shew what is implied in it.

There is a twofold coming away from the world.

1. There is a natural coming out of it. By the course of nature, we are all on our way out of it. *One generation passeth away, and another cometh.* In this respect there is no abiding in it. Time runs with a rapid course, and whether we sleep or wake, it carries us down the stream, and will ere long waft us all into the ocean of eternity: and then farewell for ever the deceitful world. We are done with it for ever.

2. There is a spiritual coming out of it, namely, in heart and affection. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." And thus believers in the exercise of grace are making away out of it. *They are coming up from the wilderness leaning upon their beloved.* When though they be in the world, yet they are living like people of another world; when though their bodies be on the earth, yet their hearts are in heaven. This is what Christ is calling you to this day. The substance of which you may take up in these few things. Christ is saying to you,

1. Take your last look, the parting look of the world by faith even as Moses did of the profits and pleasures of Egypt. "He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." You looked with an unwary eye and lay down; look again where you are lying among the lions' dens, and rise up, and haste away. Take a believing look of the world as it is represented in God's word, deceitful and dangerous to the soul, as that which has wounded many, yea, and slain its ten thousands. Do as he, who upon awakening finds himself at the mouth of a lion's den, he looks to it with horror and runs away. Till you see your danger, you will never come away.

2. Turn your backs then upon the things of the world. Be mortified to them. Say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Our hearts are naturally glued to the world. Now let the bond be effectually loosed at Christ's call, that you may mount upwards. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant." Alas! how like are we to the bird that has a stone fixed by a cord to its foot, rising to fly it cannot because of the weight. "Let us then lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Lift up your hearts this day from the world's smiles, resolving through grace never to be again beguiled with them as you have been. "There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." You have lain long enough among the pots, and sure I am, you cannot but say, though you have been smoked sufficiently there, yet you have never been satisfied.—Come then let us break the world's silver cords of death; stop our ears at its siren songs, that have been bitterness already, and will be bitterness in the end, if we do not give them over.

The smiling world is meeting and embracing some. It is casting into their lap plentifully, and still they have prospect of more. But O! take heed to the dangerous embraces, lest it hug you to death, as surely it will, if you do not shake yourselves loose of it, "For the turning away of the simple, shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." I would therefore say to you in the words of Solomon, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an

adder." The world is fleeing away from others, yet they are still following the bulky vanity, crying who will shew us any good? But O! give over the chase lest you fall on the mountains of vanity, and injure your souls, while pursuing shadows, which, if you had them, would not fill your hand. "They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."

Regard not the world's frowns. "By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." Resolve through grace this day, to live above them, to set your face against the storm, and blow what weather it will, to be forward. Whatever may befall us, let us say with Habakkuk, "Yet we will rejoice in the Lord, we will joy in the God of our salvation." O what a shame is it to see Christ's spouse always hanging down her head, when the world twists its brows. The clouds will return after the rain in these lower regions, and there is no correcting of the bad air that blows in the weary land. Let us resolve to take it as it comes, as those who are not to stay with it, who have business in another world, and must needs be forward, be it foul, be it fair.

3. Give up this day with the men of the world, never more to mix with the natives of the weary land; who labour for nothing but the entertainment of Lebanon, and who have taken up their home among the lions' dens. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." You have sported long enough with them, about the hole of the asp and the cockatrice den, and have seen many of them fall in, yet you are preserved. Now come away and leave them, lest you fall in next. Be exhorted "to save yourselves from this untoward generation."

Give up with the way of the men of the world. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away." Give over their fashions, though they be fashions with which you have been bred. *Forget also thine own people and thy Father's house.* If you have a mind to come away with Christ, you must this day commence nonconformists to the world. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Resolve henceforth to seek another portion, than that with which they take up. To follow higher and more noble designs than they do; and that your joys and sorrows shall run in another channel than theirs do.

Give up with their company. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." If you

are resolved to come away with Christ, then they are not going your way, therefore you must forsake them. Why should you live with them when you would not desire to die with them. Evil company has ruined many, it has been the grave of their convictions, the pit in which good purposes and resolutions have perished, the wall of separation betwixt God and many a soul, and so in the end the absolute destruction of many for eternity. Let us now proceed,

III. To shew the import of coming away with Christ from the world.

1. Our Lord has a better place for your reception, than the world can be in its best dress. "But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath provided for them a city." This is the new Jerusalem. There his Father's house stands. And in that house are many mansions. If you ask where the city is situated? It is in the better country, Immanuel's land, the land that is blessed with an eternal spring, in which are no clouds, no night but an eternal day. If you enquire after the profits of the house? There is in it an eternal weight of glory. The possessor of it *shall inherit all things*. Rivers of pleasure are there. As to the dignity of the house, the inhabitants are all Kings and Priests unto God. The society of saints, angels, and to be ever with the Lord, constitute the felicity of the place.

2. Our Lord can assuredly bring you into this glorious and happy place. But O! will I obtain admission? Why, come with me says Christ, there will be no hinderance if you enter along with me. His Father has made him Lord of the land. Lord high steward of the house. "All power, saith Jesus, is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He has purchased the house, the country by his own blood, and he must either lose his expensive property, or have it peopled with the sons of fallen Adam.

3. That place is his own choice. It is long since he gave orders to tell his people where he was going. "Go, said he, to my Brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." Now, says he, come with me. When he was in the world he never intended to stay for he despised it. He regarded not the smiles and flatteries of the world. A crown here he did not value. He despised the frowns of the world, and endured the cross. Well may he say come, he says not go, for he orders you to ride no ford, but what he himself hath passed before you.

4. Christ is in his way thither, out of the world to his Father's house, the better country. What, is not Christ there already?

True, Christ personal is there, but Christ mystical is not there yet. There is a ravishing sight in the wilderness, if you could see it. There is a march sounded in the wilderness, and Christ's camp is lifted, and the fair army is upon their march to Immanuel's land, and they are so far advanced in their march, that their Forerunner, the General, and the van have already got over Jordan, and the rear is coming up with displayed banners, and they will be there too ere long. What means the sleeping world, that they do not see how they are left behind, that they do not hear the General's voice, saying, *come away with me.*

5. Our Lord is very desirous of your company by the way, yes, and to have you away with him for altogether. Come, enlist yourselves ye natives of the mountains, and leave the lions' dens. Come up ye stragglers, keep up your ranks. Our Lord loves to have you direct at his back, so as you may receive the word of command and encouragement, that is always going through the army. Is there any poor fool broken off and skulking among the lions' dens? He is crying to you come away. Is there any poor soul fallen back and hiding itself in some hole, as ashamed to look their Captain in the face, or to shew their head among the fair company? To such he says come away; come away forward, onward, homeward. Yes, home, for he will have you home. "Father I will, says he, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."

6. Our Lord displays his glory to you in the gospel, to win your hearts and get you away with him. Come, says he, *with me, with me.* As if he had said, will you look to me, that will cure the madness and frenzy into which a look of the bewitching world hath cast you. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." As when the sun appears, the stars hide their heads, and have no beauty by reason of that which excelleth; so the glory of the Son of God, discerned by faith, will make all the glory of the world like a small candle before the sun, going out with smoke.

7. Our Lord offers you, not only better in hope, but better in hand than the world can give you. Come *with me.* Do not complain that he would pluck you off the breasts, it is only to pluck you off the dry the foulsome breasts of the world, to set you upon better; "That ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation; that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory."

He knows the frame of our hearts, they must always have something to feed upon, and that they will never part with the world,

but for something that is better. "Shake thyself from the dust; arise and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." You shall be with him, with him at home, that is heaven. With him in the way, that is heaven on the earth. Communion with him. Habitual communion in fellowship with him in his righteousness, death, Spirit, purchase. Actual communion in the communications of his grace and manifestations of himself.

8. If you will come away, you shall go as he goes, you shall go together. Go as he goes in point of duty. Esteem all things as he does. Let his choice be your choice. Rejoice in those things in which he rejoices; and be grieved for what grieves his Spirit. Love what he loves, and hate what he hates. *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* And you shall go as he goes in point of privilege. You shall have your lot with him. Always take his side, whoever oppose him, and you shall share in all the advantages which his friends shall have of the world here or hereafter. Wherever the world may drive you, he will be with you.

9. He will lead you and support you through the whole of the way. You are now in the fields of the world, and there will be difficult steps in your way to the city; these will not be easily discerned, but come with him, he will keep you from stumbling on the dark mountains. And "I will bring, says he, the blind by a way which they knew not; I will lead them in paths which they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." He will bear you up and bear you through with all the weight of your guilt, duties, and afflictions, for you must come with him leaning as the Bride upon the Bridegroom.

Lastly, He will be all to you in all. Leave all the world and come *with me*, for all, as the espoused bride goes with her husband. Whatever comfort, pleasure, and delight you drew out of the muddy streams, you may now draw in a far superior manner from the fountain. Thus it shall be your duty and privilege too, to live as people of another world. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." To maintain a heavenly frame, will make your whole conversation heavenly. To be frequent and fervent in duties, will lead you to fellowship with him in providences and ordinances. And that will make a pleasant sight. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?"

Uses of Improvement.

Hearken, O sinners! to this call, which Christ gives to his church. Come away with him, you that are espoused to him, and even you that are not so, but are in the visible church, where he seeks his Bride. Come away to him, come with him from out of this world and the lions' dens. Take your parting look of the mountains of vanity, and come away. For motives,

1. Consider that these mountains are certainly to be laid waste. A fire will devour them as Sodom. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up with fire." Christ calls all for whom he has a kindness to make haste from these mountains, as Lot did out of Sodom, and this is a certain evidence that they are devoted to destruction. Therefore come away and look not back. And if his own were once freely out, then the pillars are removed and this weary world falls into the fire.

Motive 2.—Is it not the place of lions' dens? How then can you be safe in it. Has not the great roaring lion his den in it? And does he not go about catching his prey in every part of it? 1 Pet. v. 8. Is it not full of wicked men who are young lions? May not the yellings which you hear in their blasphemies against God and religion, their roarings against the church and the work of God, and the devouring work which they frequently make upon their fellow creatures, may not all these make it a weary land in your eyes.

3. Is there any among us all, to whom it has not been a place of lions' dens? Let your conscience speak, and say, has it not been in many instances an unkind world to you? How often has it touched you in the sore heel, and given you a blow where you were least able to bear it? How often have lions and leopards as it were started out upon you from places where you expected nothing but to have been in ease and safety. And will you yet hug the serpent, and dandle that which has so often bruised your bones. Do it no longer, but come away with Christ. For,

4. In the enjoyment of Christ, you will not be grieved with disappointments as you have been from the world. Worldly things are fairest afar off, greater in expectation than in enjoyment. But the enjoyment of Christ will far surpass your most elevated expectation. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The treasure of the gospel will endure through all the ages of eternity. How often have you put out your hand to take up what you needed from the world, and behold you have had no-

thing. Every disappointment from the world with which you meet, says for Christ, come away.

5. He will not reward your love with hatred as the world has done a thousand times. "I love them, says he, that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Have you not heartily stretched yourself down on the deceitful mountains, and ere you were aware, a serpent has bit you, and sent you away wounded? Have you not found your greatest cross one way or another in your greatest comfort, either in the possession of it, or in the loss of it? Have you not, where you pressed hardest for sweet, wrung out blood, instead of milk, and striking at the rocky mountains for water, all you have got was fire flashing in your faces.

6. You will get a surer hold of Christ, than ever you could get of the world. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." How oft have you thought yourselves sure of the creature, but you have been deceived? You have dreamed, and behold you were full, but awakening you found yourself empty. All worldly things are uncertain in life, and at death they will leave you altogether. None of them will go with you to the other world.

7. Christ is altogether lovely, and this the world never was to you, nor to any of Adam's sons. Did you ever lie down on any place of the deceitful mountains, but there was a thorn under you? Got you ever that good thing yet but it had a want? The fairest rose has its prickles. And thorns and briers come up by the side of the sweetest earthly comforts.

8. If you will come away from the world with Christ, you will need care the less what weather blow upon the mountains. Shaking storms use to be there, and for as fair as it is now, you know not how soon the storm may rise, and the lions and leopards be let loose. Wo to the natives then, the inhabiters of the world, that have all their stock on the mountains. But if you be on your way with Christ, he will take care of you, and be the blast as bitter as it will, it will be on your back, and speed you on your way.

Lastly, He will fill and satisfy the desires of your hearts, which the world never could and never shall. *Open thy mouth*, says he, *wide, and I will fill it.* All things which grow on the mountains, are but husks to the soul. And if you had the whole world at your beck, it would leave you with a breast full of unsatisfied desires. Come then restless creature. Come and rest in Jesus Christ. Comply with the call now. You will wish you had done it at death, when you are driven out of the world, and at the judgment

when driven from Christ. He is now willing to receive the worst of you into his blessed train. "Behold, says he, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Amen.

Ettrick, July 22, 1716.

[Being the first Sabbath after dispensing the Lord's Supper.]

CAUTIONS AGAINST QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

SERMON X.

1 THESSALONIANS v. 19.

Quench not the Spirit.

IT may be reasonably thought, that it was not without some design, that God sent us the solemn ordinance, which we observed last Sabbath; and that the Spirit of the Lord was not idle among us, while the arrows of the word were flying in such numbers, along with the sacrament. Surely several were touched in one way or another. And if these things were rightly managed they might come to a good account. But alas! some as they get touches of the Spirit lightly without seeking, so they let them go as lightly. Others are at pains to earn something, and when got they put into a bag with holes. But whoever would have any lasting good in religion would do well to hearken to this exhortation. *Quench not the Spirit.* In these words, there is, 1. A holy fire supposed to be kindled in the souls of men. In Matthew iii. 11. John said of Jesus, *he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.* Here the Spirit is compared to fire, and in other places to water. This is not meant of the person of the Spirit who cannot be quenched, but of his gifts, operations, and motions, which are often quenched. It is thus expressed because the injury redounds to the Spirit himself.

2. Our duty with respect to this holy fire. Quench it not. Do not put it out or weaken it in the soul. More is understood. Cherish the Spirit, give fuel to this sacred fire, maintain and keep it in, and blow it up. Be concerned kindly to entertain the operations, and motions of the Spirit.

Doctrine.—It is the duty of all to take heed that they quench not the holy fire of the Spirit kindled in the soul, but that they nourish

and cherish it. To prepare this for application, which I chiefly design. I shall only,

I. Give you some distinctions of quenching the Spirit.

II. Shew how the Spirit is quenched.

III. Offer reasons why we should not quench the Spirit. We are then,

I. To give some distinctions of quenching the Spirit.

1. There is a total and a partial quenching of the Spirit. A total quenching is when the Spirit is quite extinguished, his motions and impressions on the soul quite erased so as there remains not one spark among the ashes. Thus Saul and other graceless men have quenched the Spirit, and this ends in giving them up to the lusts of their own hearts. *My Spirit*, saith God, shall not always strive with men. And this Spirit departed from Saul.

A partial quenching is, When the Spirit is weakened, the force and vigour of his motions and impressions abated, and the fire brought to a very spark. Thus the godly may be guilty of quenching the Spirit. Thus David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free Spirit."

2. There is a wilful and a weak quenching of the Spirit.

The wilful quenching is when men resolutely set themselves to put out the holy fire, being resolved not to part with their lusts, they go on in opposition to their light, and strangle their uneasy consciences, and murder their convictions, that they may sin without control. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." This is a dangerous case.

A weak quenching I call that which flows rather from weakness than wickednesss, rather from carelessness than design. This is called grieving of the Spirit, Ephes. vi. 30. It is described, Song v. 2.—5.

3. There is a quenching of the Spirit in ourselves, or in others. The Spirit may be quenched in ourselves by ourselves. God sometimes kindles the holy fire in our hearts, and miserable, we put it out. For though we cannot kindle, we can extinguish it. Though we cannot open the door we can shut it. "For my people, saith the Lord, is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Like little children that can do the ill, but not the good.

We may quench the Spirit in others, even as one may put out the fire in another person's house. "But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." Thus ministers may quench the Spirit in people, and people in ministers. One member of a family in another, and one neighbour in another, by discouraging, vexing and oppressing them in what is good and holy, by which means their knees are enfeebled and their hands weakened in following the Lord in the way of duty. I now proceed,

II. To shew how the Spirit is quenched. This holy fire is quenched,

1. By doing violence to it, as when one puts his foot on the fire or casts water on it; or blows out a candle. So there is a doing violence to the Spirit, and thus the Spirit is quenched by sins of commission, especially such as are done with a high hand, and in opposition to light. By these the Spirit is grieved. As when one raises an offensive smoke in the room where his guest sits, he is grieved and departs: so the Spirit is grieved by the offensive smell arising from our raging corruptions.

2. The fire of the Spirit is quenched by the neglecting of it, as when one does not supply fuel to the fire, it will go out, though no violence be done to it. The lamp also will be extinguished if you feed it not with more oil. So the Spirit is quenched by neglecting his motions, not cherishing them, not walking in the light while we have it. For however briskly this wind blow, it will cease, if we do not spread out our sails and make way with it, for it will not blow to no purpose. We are now,

III. To give reasons why we should not quench the Spirit.

1. Because it is the holy fire; and therefore it ought to be kept carefully, and it is dangerous to meddle with it. It is fire from heaven, not the fire of God's anger, but of his Spirit. When the people saw the fire come down, Lev. ix. 24. *They shouted and fell on their faces.* They were filled with awe and reverence of God. So should we in this case, especially as it is committed to our care. It is the fire of the altar, the Spirit of Christ, the purchase of his sufferings and death: and therefore when we feel his motions and operations, we should be careful of them as of the purchase of blood.

2. Because we can do nothing without it. *Without me,* says Jesus, *ye can do nothing.* So far as the Spirit goes away, all true light and heat go with him, and then the soul remains as in a state of death, in darkness, cold and stiff. When the wind ceases, how can the ship sail? And when the Spirit is quenched, how can we make to our harbour?

3. Because when once quenched we cannot rekindle it. We have no command over the Spirit, "We can neither tell whence in cometh nor whether it goeth." Were it the fire of our own hearths, though it were extinguished, we might kindle it again. But it is from heaven and we have no command there. He that will not sail while wind and tide serve, must even lie still till they come again. But a fair wind has blown to some for Immanuel's land, which having slighted, they have never again enjoyed, as in the case of Felix.

Lastly, Because the quenching of this fire, is the raising of another tending to the consuming of the soul. This is a fire of corruption within us. When the Spirit departed from Saul he went to the devil. And some people never come to a height in wickedness till the Spirit of the Lord has been at work with them, and they have quenched his motions. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none. Then saith he, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

It is a fire of God's anger without us. "But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." For thus men turn fighters against God, enter the lists with their Creator and oppose themselves to him, who is a consuming fire.

Use. Quench not the Spirit. And

I. Quench not the Spirit in others, but cherish and nourish it. When you can perceive any good motions and inclinations wrought in a person, beware of doing any thing to weaken them, but help them forward. Let us,

I. Inquire how one may quench the Spirit in others?

1. By mocking them, and the way which they are looking after. This is the persecution of the tongue, which Satan raises against persons when once they begin to turn serious. In allusion to the son of the bond woman mocking Sarah and her son, the apostle says, "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." With this the saints meet not only from the openly profane, but also from the formal professor. "With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth." But lay your accounts with it, and be on your guard that the Spirit be not quenched by it, Jude, ver. 17. and downwards. And for such as do it, let them remember these words, "Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; for I have

heard from the Lord God a consumption even determined upon the whole earth."

3. By speaking evil of the way of God, Acts xix. 9. It is said, "divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude." There are many who act the devil's part in this matter, who to quench the Spirit in others, bawl out their virulent speeches against sermons, communions, ministers, communicants; a very proper way to stifle any good motions in others, in the very birth. Would to God such would consider. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

3. By opposing themselves to others aiming at the way of the Lord, setting themselves to crush and bear down real religion and holiness in them. "When the Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed, Paul shook his raiment, and said unto them, your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

Seldom do any begin to walk with God, but Satan raises up some one or other, to be a dead weight upon them in their way. This is malignancy, and the true spirit of malignants; and such persons are real malignants, profess what they will, and God will treat them as such. But remember that Jesus hath said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

4. By diverting them from their duty. Thus Elymas the sorcerer withstood the apostles, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. There is a generation, who, when the Spirit of God is calling persons one way, they are ready to call them another, and thereby to efface from their minds all impressions of religion. Evil company is one of the chief pillars of the devil's kingdom, and has been the grave of convictions to many. *Evil communications corrupt good manners.* But let such hear these words, "O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"

Lastly, By tempting them to sin. "Thus Balaam, taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." Sin grieves the Spirit and provokes him to depart, and thus the soul being left dead, alienated from the life of God, the tempter is a quencher of the Spirit, and a murderer of souls. This is the case especially when

the tempter knows their weak side and attacks them there, and lays stumbling blocks before them, where they are least able to resist. What is this but to act the devil's part against the Spirit.

II. Let us inquire how we should cherish the Spirit in others.

1. By the example of a tender holy life. Example has a powerful influence, and will be fuel to the holy fire. Paul tells us *that the zeal of the Corinthians hath provoked very many.* It strengthens good impressions wrought by the Spirit on the souls of others, and confirms them against temptations to apostacy, which they may have from other quarters.

2. By encouraging them to follow on in the good way of the Lord. Thus when Barnabas "had come to Antioch and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them all, that with full purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord." It is a pity that while others have a mouth to speak against God and his way, that we should not have a mouth to open for him. It would not a little contribute to the advancement of holiness, that we shewed a tender concern for Christ's little ones, and that they were countenanced and encouraged, according to the inclinations to piety appearing in them.

3. By stirring them up to their duty, especially when they are in hazard of sloth gaining upon them. This is to blow the holy fire and increase it. "I think it meet, says Peter, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance." Mutual admonition is the duty of all Christians, and a part of the communion of saints. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

4. By warding off temptations from them, so far as lies in our power. We should try to hold them off altogether, but if we cannot thus prevent them, we should labour to blunt their edge and to support them against them, and do what we can to remove them. "Blessed are the peace makers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Lastly, By communicating Christian experiences to them. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." How often has this blown up the fire that was nearly being extinguished. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." The ceasing of this Christian conversation among professors, is one great cause of the decay of religion at this day.

"The disciples said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

III. I shall present some motives to excite us to this duty.

1. Your duty to your neighbour calls for this at your hand. It is a graceless tale to say with Cain, *Am I my brother's keeper?* As you are men, the moral law obliges you to it. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* And how do you love him, if you love not his soul? and how do you love his soul, if you do not cherish the Spirit in him? As you are Christians, our Saviour says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The communion of saints is an article of our creed, but it is much worn out in practice. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not only a seal of our communion with Christ, but with one another, and so to bind us effectually to a particular concern for the welfare of one another's souls.

2. Your duty to our Lord Jesus Christ binds you to it. "For the zeal of thine house, saith David, hath eaten me up: and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." Have you any concern for the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Then it will not be mere speaking for the support of an opinion that will satisfy you, but active endeavours for advancing of real holiness. The Spirit of Christ is a public Spirit, that will lead us to be concerned for the welfare of others as well as our own. For it is natural for each member of the body to be concerned for the prosperity of the body.

3. As you act in this matter, so you join with God or the devil, and may expect your reward accordingly. If you quench the Spirit in others, then you are fighters against God, you are workers together with the devil, whose work it is to quench the Sprit in the hearts of sinners. Acts v. 35—39. If you cherish the Spirit you are workers together with God, and are pursuing the same design with the Spirit of Christ. And now the Lord is saying, who is on my side? Arrange yourselves then on his side, and be exhorted to save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Lastly, The salvation or damnation of your neighbour, may, for ought you know, depend upon it. If you cherish the Spirit in others you may be the instruments of the salvation of a soul. And remember "that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." If you quench the Spirit in them, you know not if ever the holy fire may be rekindled, after you have put it out, and so the blood of their souls may be required at your hand.

II. Quench not the Spirit in your own souls but nourish and cherish it. Before I proceed to prosecute this exhortation, I must speak to three cases.

I. There may be some, that after all that was going at this solemn occasion, they were looking for nothing, and they have got as little. So this sin cannot fall out in their hand, they cannot quench the Spirit, for the holy fire was never kindled in their hearts. Thus having nothing, they can lose nothing. To such I would say,

1. What would you think to see the showers of heaven fall all around on your neighbour's ground, while not one drop fell on yours, and this in time of a great drought? Would you not think yourselves the mark at which God shoots his arrows? Now what can you think of yourselves when God toucheth the hearts of others, but never toucheth yours? When he goes by you, and comes by you, speaks by his Spirit to those on your right hand and those on your left, but never one word to you? Is not this very like the case of being given up of God; "Ephraim is joined to his idols let him alone." For a tree to be without leaves, or fruit in the winter is nothing, but to be so in the spring and summer, when all about it is flourishing, says that tree is for the axe and near to the fire.

2. Do you think that such a state as this will continue? Will you always be secure and sleep in peace? Nay, you shall have an awakening sooner or later, if not in mercy it will be in wrath. "Rise up ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women." If you should sleep it out all your days, you shall awaken at length, never to close your eyes more. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." God will one time or other take the filthy garments of thy sin, wrap them up in brimstone, and set them on fire about your ears.

II. There may be others, that whether they were looking for it or not, got something, but it is gone from them already, like Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The Spirit is already quenched in them.

1. Consider that you have lost a fair wind for Immanuel's land, and that is a great loss. It is a shameful loss, it is gone so soon. And have you even so soon forgot his works? You were told your hazard. You might have taken better heed. Be ashamed and grieved on this account.

2. Take it in time and there may be hope to recover it, set about it quickly. Rise now and seek a recovery. The longer you delay, it will be the harder to recover. "I will rise now, and go about the city: in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth."

3. Go back and seek where you lost it. Consider what particular neglect of yours, or what particular violence done to the Spirit it was, which provoked him to depart. Seek it out, mourn over it, apply to the blood of Christ for the removal of it, and you will recover. For this blood "purgeth our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."

Lastly, Go over your whole work again, in self examination, viewing the several steps of your way about the communion, and review your covenant with God there sealed, and cry to him by prayer for the return of his Spirit. Song iii. 2. and downwards. And hang on about his hand resolutely, till you be revived, and made to walk in the paths of righteousness.

III. There may be others, that were looking for something. But alas! says the soul, I am sadly disappointed. The Lord has hid his face. How shall I do, who have little or nothing to do with? To such I would say,

1. Your case is so far hopeful, as you are sensible of it. Bless God your case is not like Samson's, "when he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." The knowledge of the disease is the first step to the cure.

2. Consider what may have been the procuring causes. It may be there has been some remarkable defect in your preparation to meet the Lord. Perhaps you have not been at pains to prepare yourselves, neglecting self-examination, or being careless in it, not stirring up the sacramental graces. And if so, you may wonder more, that he has not made a breach on you, than that he has hid his face from you.

Look there has not been some unrepented of guilt lying on your conscience. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Some of the old leaven retained, some bosom idol nourished, some Achan in the camp. "Now if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us." If so, search it out and remove that bane of strife betwixt the Lord and you. Look that you have not sat down on your preparation. It is hard for us to be at much pains and not think too much of it. And thus one may be like the bee, that drowns itself in its own work. If so mourn over it. Finally, Look that while you have done many things, you have not neglected the main thing, that is the great duty of believing, believing in the gospel promise sealed by the sacrament. There are some poor tossed souls, who in effect are sometimes not disposed to believe, and they do not see the evil, they refuse to be comforted, or make

any believing application to themselves of Christ and his benefits. "If I had called, says Job, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause." But pray what do you mean? Must God change his method of grace for you? Hear what Christ says, "said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God."

3. Perhaps you complain more of your case than need requires. As to your disappointment. There are some disappointments not to be complained of. They are useful for carrying on the Lord's work in the soul. There are deadening disappointments, that take away with them all the appetite of the soul after Christ and his benefits, and sharpen the appetite after the world and lusts. Numbers xi. 4. and downwards. So that being disappointed at Christ's door, they go the more greedily back to that of the world and their lusts. This is very dangerous. But there are also quickening disappointments, that stir up the soul to seek the Lord more earnestly. Song iii. 4. Our Lord has sundry dishes at his table. Some for filling the guests, these are sensible enjoyments. Some for appetizing them, and these are these quickening disappointments. If you have got this, quench not the Spirit, for you have that which is of more worth than you are aware, Song v. 4,—6. If our Lord hath passed by you, but withal thrown this live coal into your heart in passing, cherish it, pursue and you shall find.

Besides there are different measures of the Spirit, and divers operations of the same Spirit; and the holy fire is not alike vigorous in all where it comes. But the least filing of gold is gold, and therefore precious. And the least motions of the Spirit are to be entertained; the least spark of the holy fire is to be fed and not quenched.

Question.—How shall I know that the Spirit has been at work in my soul, that any of the holy fire has been kindled in my heart, that so I may know what to do? Answer,

I. The holy fire has light with it. Is there a new light let into thy soul from the word, that is promising. But know that there are very different degrees of that light. The blind man whose eyes our Lord opened, after the first touch, saw men as trees walking, but when Jesus put his hands upon him again, then he was restored and saw every man clearly. The King brings some into his chambers, and by the light shining about them, they see and are assured of the Lord's love to them. They can read the covenant with Christ's name and their own name at the foot of it. O quench not the Spirit, improve the golden spot of time and walk softly for the

light is easily put out. "What shall I say? said Hezekiah when his life was lengthened, he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul." Others perhaps have only got some glimmerings of solid hope from the Lord. They came in a dark night of desertion. But the day began to break with them and their head was brought a little above the water, though they could not read the covenant clearly; yet like the blind man, they saw men as trees; had some faint discoveries of their interest in his favour. Quench not the Spirit. Some perhaps have only seen a glory in Christ which they saw not before. They have lived strangers to him hitherto, but now he is more beautiful in their eyes than formerly. O quench not the Spirit, but blow up the spark. Imitate the spouse, Song v. 9. to the end. Think upon the excellencies of Christ, and seek after him.

All that others have got, is perhaps but some convictions of sin. Some arrows have pierced their consciences. Or perhaps but one single arrow is sticking there. O quench not the Spirit. Has the conscience got a touch, the heart may get one next. One stone in the building of sin loosened, may make way for all falling together. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do."

II. The holy fire has a burning heat with it. And this also is of very different degrees. Some perhaps have had the satisfaction to see the holy fire take hold of their corruptions, as that however masterful at other times, yet that fire brought them down, and made them fall to ashes. The Lord has treated them as Joshua did his captains, when he caused them put their feet upon the necks of the captive kings. Some lusts that have long held them under they got subdued. O quench not the Spirit. Wounded lusts getting time to recover, have made sad work at a second onset. Quench not the Spirit, otherwise the brand plucked out of the burning will recover strength. All that it has done for others is, that fire has been set to the bond that bound their hearts and lusts together. They are come the length to be content, that they and their lusts were freely parted, though they know not how it will be done. O quench not the Spirit. You have your lusts now at an advantage. The throne of sin in the heart is shaken. Lusts sit not so fast as they did there. Hold hand to the tottering fence, its breaking may come at an instant.

With some there may be only an unusual, but weak warmth in the heart after Christ and religion. They have a hankering after

him. They are more squeamish as to their lusts than before; though perhaps they cannot yet see, how if they quit them for Christ, their loss will be made up. Truly this is very little, but every thing must have a beginning. O quench not the Spirit; the cloud like a man's hand may soon cover the heavens. The conversion of Zaccheus had as small a beginning. Luke xiii. 3. *He sought to see Jesus, who he was.* You have seen and are touched. Take a better look of the plant of renown, and you may come to be pierced, caught, captivated.

Some may find no sensible warmth in their breasts after him, but there is an uneasiness in their conscience, as by a spark falling from a candle on a person's hand. They have a sort of uneasiness with respect to their soul's case, a secret dissatisfaction with their state. This is very little, but it may be the beginning of good. Then quench not the Spirit, for if the dry bones be but beginning to move, they may come together. Thus it appears the Spirit may be at work, though in different degrees. And though your attainments be not so great as those of others, be thankful for what you have attained, and cherish it.

Perhaps it has not been so dark a night with you, as with them that have got a clearer day. If you be not lifted up so high as others, it is like you have not been plunged so low as they were. In the dispensation of grace usually the saddest dejection goes before the greatest elevation. "For every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."

Again, It is like you have not such hard work before you, as they have. God's children are not suffered to eat idle bread. There is commonly hard work appointed for them that get a large meal. "Thus the angel of the Lord came again the second time to Elijah, and touched him and said, arise and eat because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God." The clearest manifestations of God to a soul, ordinarily usher in the hardest services. If you compare the life of Isaac with the life of Jacob, the latter had the greatest enjoyments, but so had he the hardest trials. Once more sovereignty challenges a latitude. *Is it not lawful for me*, says God, to do what I will with mine own? Is thine *eye evil, because I am good?* It takes one piece of clay and sets it upon a throne, another piece of the same clay and sets it upon a dunghill, Job xxi. 22,—25. Every disciple

is not the beloved disciple. One is dandled upon the knee, another is led to heaven by the brink of hell.

And however small your attainment be, yet consider, the less it be it will die out the sooner, so there is the more need to be at pains to keep it alive. They that have but one coal had need to cover it well, that it go not out. No person need teach those that have but one penny in their purse to steward it well. O that we were as wise in spiritual things as in temporal.

Consider also, that however little it be Satan will think it worth his pains to rob you of it. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." And is it not then worth pains to keep it. But, alas! we are not so watchful by far for our salvation, as Satan is for our destruction.

Again, Be it as small as it will, it is your all. The poor man thinks he has as good reason to be careful of his little stock, as another has to be careful of his great one. And if that little be gone what have you more. But if you labour not to preserve the little, you would let more go if you had it. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." And therefore it is just with God to give you no more of that kind to abuse. So then God has you on your trials for more, while he puts some little thing into your hand. Take heed how you use it. For the least beginning of good to your souls is of more worth than the whole world. It may be the seed of everlasting life to you, and so virtually comprehend your everlasting happiness, which it will be dreadful to throw away. And the less a precious thing be, it is the more carefully preserved.

Finally, Consider that the kingdom of God in a soul often has a very small beginning. Hence it is compared "To a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds."

And now having considered these cases, I resume my exhortation.

Quench not the Spirit in yourselves, but nourish and cherish it.

I. I shall shew how the Spirit may be quenched by you in your own souls. There are many ways to do this, you should beware of them all.

1. By unwatchfulness. Hence the exhortation, "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die." The holy fire will go out if it be not watched. A careless disposition of mind will soon make an empty soul. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." If we consider that our hearts are like wet timber, that it is unfit for keeping fire, and that there are so many

temptations like rain falling from the clouds, we will soon see, that there is no keeping the fire in, if we give over our watching.

2. By neglect of duties. The heart of man touched by the finger of God is like a watch, that if it be not duly rolled up will not go. Thomas being absent from one occasion of communion with Christ, his heart was overspread with the power of unbelief. If a man neglect the means of grace, how can he think his soul will prosper. The neglecting of prayer once, or of any other duty may quench the Spirit. And one such neglect may be a wide door for good impressions to go out at.

3. By not complying with holy motions raised in the heart. David was aware of this. Hence says he, "When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." It is a dangerous business to sit still, when the Lord, by a secret working on the soul, may be calling one to rise. To shift a duty while the Spirit of the Lord is inwardly prompting a man to it. Sometimes persons have smarted sadly this way. They would not go when wind and tide were inviting, and afterwards when they would the wind would not serve. The Spirit of the Lord, like a man held too long at the door, being grieved departs, and is gone when the door comes to be opened. "I opened, says the spouse to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone."

But to prevent delusion in this case, Consider that the Spirit of the Lord sets men always on work in season. Accordingly the good man bringeth forth his fruit in his season. And hence though a motion in itself be good, yet if it be unseasonable, that is an evidence, that it is either from our own spirits, or a worse. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace as in all the churches." Again the duty will be a duty of our station. "But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk: and so I ordain in all churches." Thus some think Uzzah's error in putting forth his hand and taking hold of the ark, 2 Sam. vi. 6. was that he was no Levite. So though it seemed a pious motion, yet not being a duty of his station, it was unacceptable and offensive in the sight of God.

In like manner, violent motions are to be suspected. For these that come from the Spirit of the Lord, if they bring not a convincing evidence along with them, as light discovers itself, to carry the person at first beyond hesitation; they will admit deliberation, and always trial by the word. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." Whereas delusions shun the light, as unable to abide a trial. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them."

4. Sins against light, do in a special manner quench the Spirit. "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." By these the holy fire is quenched, as by vessels of water thrown upon a fire to put it out. They waste the conscience, erase good impressions from the heart, defile the soul, and provoke the Spirit to depart. Beware of them, for they will quench the Spirit and are highly provoking in the sight of God. For sins of ignorance and weakness make men go halting, but such presumptuous sins do as it were break the legs of the travellers to Zion.

5. Fleshly lusts have a special malignant influence this way. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." They are the impure waters, in which good impressions are drowned. To be drunk with wine, and filled with the Spirit are inconsistent and incompatible. "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." What we have, Prov. xxiii. 21. holds true in spiritual as well as in temporal things. "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." Filthiness and uncleanness wear out good motions in a very effectual manner. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy. They who give themselves up to voluptuousness and sensuality in heart and life, will soon find the Spirit will be quenched by these means. For they who drench themselves in the pleasures of the flesh, will find it hard to get out of the mire to soar aloft.

6. Inordinate care of and love to the world. "And that which fell among the thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choaked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." When the heart is set upon the stretch for gaining and keeping of the things of the world, good motions do evanish, because the hold of them cannot be kept, while such an eager hold is taken of other things, no more than one can grasp at heaven and earth at once. These are like wasps and flies that disturb the soul, that it cannot rest in God. And how can a man ever think to prosper, while he comes not away with Christ from the deceitful and dangerous world.

7. Backsliding and returning again to former sins. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Therefore take that exhortation. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance." If men will go back to the same courses, which have before injured their souls,

and will play with the serpent that has so often bit them; what can they expect but that the Spirit will be quenched.

Lastly, The entertaining of any one lust or idol, of jealousy will do it. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." While Samson lay in Delila's lap, he lost his locks and the Lord departed from him. The fly goes about the candle till its wings are burned. And the entertaining of some unmortified idol ofttimes rears up a wall of separation betwixt God and a soul. Let us now,

II. Know how we may nourish and cherish this holy fire.

1. Be diligent in duties. *The soul of the diligent shall be made fat.* Let no opportunity of communion with God slip. He that would advance his spiritual stock, must trade in the market of free grace.

It is observable that persons readily drink in much of the spirit of those whom they love most, and with whom they most converse. And they that converse much with God, will get much of his Spirit. I would recommend to you particularly, the duty of Christian conference. See how much the disciples' going to Emmaus gained by this exercise, Luke xxiv. 17.—32. It is a notable mean to cherish good motions both in ourselves and others. It is the way to increase what we have, as well as to retain it. As air will make the coal blaze that was lying hid under the ashes, so the very speaking of God and religion, is apt to inflame the heart, that otherwise is very dead. And surely the decay of this exercise is one cause of the decay of religion in our day.

I also recommend the duty of secret prayer. A Christian much alone with God in prayer, will readily be found a thriving Christian. *Pray without ceasing.* It is a duty in which Christians most commonly have communion, and a duty to which they have access, when they cannot have it to many others. If you neglect this, truly your soul's case will soon go to wreck. Here also let me recommend a conscientious attendance upon public ordinances. "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Faith comes by hearing and so do other graces, for they follow upon it. And this makes many gracious souls that they cannot live without them. They find their need of them every day, still standing in need to be instructed, warned, directed, comforted, and stirred up to their duty. So that they are as necessary as showers to the parched ground.

And if you find yourselves in hazard of standing still or going backward, set about the duty of solemn personal fasting and humiliation.

2. Watch your hearts and labour to keep up a tender frame of spirit. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." As the heart is, so will the life be. It is the room

where the Spirit lodgeth, and if untenderness get in there, the Spirit will be grieved and depart. Labour to keep up a horror of sin, a hatred of every false way, a sense of your sinfulness, and your need of Christ's blood and Spirit. For when these are lost, the prosperity of the soul is gone, for that soul grows not, that is not growing downward in self-denial, self-abhorrence, and humility.

3. Be universally tender in your walk. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments." The Spirit must needs be quenched, when the conversation is like the legs of the lame that are not equal. If men pretend to the duties of the first table, and make no conscience of the duties of the second; or the reverse. One leak in a ship will sink it, and one sin indulged will ruin the soul's case. Therefore, walk with God as if men's eyes were on you, and with men as having God's eyes on you. Let religion have an universal influence on your walk, your thoughts, words, and actions; exciting you to your personal and relative duties. And herein exercise yourselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man.

4. Make religion your business, your main work and design in the world. Good reason it be so. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" To take religion by fits and starts will bring it to a poor account in the end. And religious chance customers will never enrich themselves with it. The salvation and generation work laid upon us, is too weighty and important, for us ever to think that it will do by the by. It is the one thing needful, therefore should be the main thing aimed at by us.

5. Let religion be woven into the whole of your conversation in the world. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it. Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." Whatever be your meat, salt is necessary to season it, and whatever we be doing, grace is necessary to qualify it, for without it nothing is pure to us, in or about us. "Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience are defiled." You should take religion with you not only to your prayers, but to your work, to the field, to your bed and table. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Viewing God in all these things, acting from a sense of his command, and as under his eye, managing in them all as may be most for the honour of God, your own and others' spiritual welfare.

6. Beware of doing any thing with a doubting conscience, doubt-

ing whether it be lawful or not. "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." But here there is need to distinguish between a doubting and a scrupulous conscience. A doubting conscience hangs in suspense, betwixt the two parts of the question, and assents to neither of them. A scrupulous conscience assents to one part of it, but there is a certain uneasiness inclining it to the other side. In this case one should endeavour to get their scruples removed by examination of them, but if after all they remain, one may safely act against them, because they are but the weakness of conscience, without foundation, and the clearest light lies to the other side. For example, one conscious of his sincere desire to be the Lord's, to give up with all sin and obey Christ's command, *do this in remembrance of me*, such an one may approach the Lord's table, notwithstanding that a sense of his unworthiness makes him scruple, whether to go forward or not. "For a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." And if it were not so, people might scruple themselves out of all religion. For it is certain, for example, that though prayer be the necessary duty of all, yet some have been tossed with scruples as to their praying, whether they should give over prayer or not. But in such a case, the scruple should be violently thrown away, if no better can be.

But in the case of the doubting conscience it is another matter, for in it for want of light the conscience has no ground to go upon. For example, money, or goods are placed before a man, he knows not whether they be his or not; if one take them to himself in this case he sins though it be his own, for the conscience, meanwhile, has no light in that matter. So for ought he knows it may be theft, in which case to let alone must certainly be the safest side which is to be followed. And this gives such a throw and wrong cast to conscience, that it is a ready way to quench the Spirit.

7. Be still pressing forward in religion. Sit not down on any measure attained, but be still labouring for more. "This one thing, says Paul, I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Get what we will here, there will always be a want. Therefore hold fast what you have, that the fire go not out. You must also blow it up still that it may burn the more keenly. The Christian never stands still. If you be not going forward, you are going backward. If you be not adding a cubit to your stature, you are decreasing.

8. Trade with your talents, improving them for God, however few

they be. Matthew xxv. 22, 23. If a person have but a little fire, yet if it get air and be blown up, it may make a brisk fire. And grace grows by improvement. It is with grace and good motions, as with a spring. If it be stopped the water goes away, but if it be cleared it runs and runs on. If one had but a conviction of sin, if he should improve that in speaking of his sinfulness to God in prayer, to humble him in meditation, and to others in Christian conversation, it would grow.

9. Be careful and tender of good motions. Rough handling of a spark will make it go out, when wise management would make much out of it. Good motions are tender birds of heaven, easily checked and put back. When the wind blows, spread out your sails, and when your hearts begin to be warmed with love to Christ and holiness, and hatred of sin, the iron then is hot, therefore strike and seize the golden opportunity of making forward in your journey to Immanuel's land.

Lastly, Entertain lively hopes of increasing your stock. "But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." When the heart grows hopeless, the hands will hang down and the knees be feeble. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. But hope of gaining makes people diligent. What though many attempts misgive. The tree falls not down at the first or second stroke of the axe. And water consumes stones by degrees. Let us,

III. Enforce this duty by some motives. Quench not the Spirit in yourselves, but cherish it.

Motive 1. Consider that the workings of the Spirit upon your souls are precious, and should be much prized. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it." These operations of the Spirit are worthy of our utmost care and diligence. They are the seeds of eternal life in a soul, which duly cherished may end in your everlasting salvation; and which, when crushed, may be fatal to your eternal misery. The living word dropped into the heart is heaven in the bud. "It is the incorruptible seed, by which we are born again." And this, when quenched, is hell in the bud.

These operations of the Spirit are high-born strangers, and should be honourably entertained. They are the sparks of the sacred fire from heaven, the product of the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of sinners. A fire this which could not be blown up by men, and therefore valuable in respect of its heavenly origin.

They are also great pledges of God's good will to sinners. By

nature we are at a distance from God. But by these, the Lord begins to draw us to himself. He enters into converse with our souls, after a long night of silence, a proof of his good will, to have the distance removed. Finally, these operations are denied to many. *Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.* How many are there whom God suffers to go on in their evil way, and the Spirit of the Lord does not touch their hearts? How many who have sometimes had them, but now they are gone? And they can no more command them, than they can blow up a fire after it hath been extinguished, or light a candle that is burned to ashes.

Motive. 2. Consider the danger of quenching the Spirit. Take heed to yourselves, while the Spirit of the Lord is at work with your souls. You walk on slippery places, where you may easily or suddenly fall, and who knows how fatal it may be. The Spirit in you, is a fire that may be soon and easily quenched.

I opened to my beloved, says the spouse, *but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.* A fine and tender flower may easily be crushed and caused to wither. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." God is a jealous God, and his Spirit is easily grieved and provoked to depart.

When this Spirit is quenched, you cannot rekindle it. Had the fire in the altar been common fire, there needed not have been so much watching to keep it burning. If it had gone out, they could have kindled it from their own hearths. But it was fire from heaven, and if once it went out, they could not kindle it again. They could not ascend to the throne and bring it down from heaven.

When the fire of the Spirit is put out, the soul's case must needs go to wreck. *Yea*, says God, *wo also to them, when I depart from them.* When the soul is gone, the body is left a lifeless lump, and corrupts in a grave, becoming a feast to the worms. And when the Spirit of the Lord leaves a soul, it dies, and living lusts set up their heads, and swarm there without controul. Hence often gross outbreakings as in the cases of David and Peter. Fearful apostacies and defections from God, as in Saul, follow the quenching of the Spirit: so that it is like the breaking out of waters, when the dyke is broken down that dammed them up, Matth. xii. 43.—45.

Motive. 3. If you cherish and improve the little you have, it is the way to get more. This will appear if you consider, that it is the Lord's ordinary way in his works, to bring great things from small beginnings. Though he could have made the world in a moment, yet he took six days, he made first a rude mass, which, day by day, he brought to perfection. See 1 Kings xviii. 43. to the end. See also how great work begins, Esther vi. 1.

Consider also that the work of grace in the soul, commonly arises from a very small beginning. It is like a grain of mustard seed. It is a seed that springs so leisurely, that the springing thereof can hardly be discerned. The beginning may be very low, which the Lord will cherish and bring to perfection. "For a bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." Besides, consider that no person gets a refusal from heaven, but those that court it by their own indifference. And indeed a careless faint way of asking from the Lord, is in effect to court a denial. He is more ready to give than we are to seek. *Open thy mouth*, says he, *wide, and I will fill it.* He loves importunity, and will not deny such a suit. And though some such suiters have stood long at his door, never one fell down dead at it. God has given his word of promise for it. "For unto every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance." A man hath no more in God's account, than what he improves. Now God doth not set down all his children with equal stocks, some have more, some less. But all have a promise of more, on their improving of what they have. And a little thing with a promise, will be like the five loaves that increased in the distribution.

Motive 4. If you quench the Spirit, you will be great losers. You will lose what you have attained. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." The good motions will go, and then the tenderness of the heart, love to Christ goes away; and you are set a step further back in your way to heaven. And who knows if you lose that if ever the wind blow so fair again for you. And if it should, you will have to begin, and it is a sad matter always to be beginning, ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

You will also lose all your pains which you have taken to get it. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious." How sad is it to be at pains for something, and then when it is got to let it slip through our fingers. We have enough to do, though we do not undo what we have been doing.

Finally, You may lose your souls by quenching the Spirit. "And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." And it will heat the furnace of hell one seven times more, to think that once you were not far from the kingdom of God. Amen.

Galashiels Communion, August, 1717.

SAINTS WRESTLING FOR THE BLESSING AND OBTAINING IT.

SERMON XI.

GENESIS xxxii. 26.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me, ver. 29. *And he blessed him there.*

How mean are the exploits and encounters of the most celebrated heroes, whom the world admires, in comparison of the great things done by faith. Natural courage and valour have gained a reputation to some, as if they only were the men, and valour died with them. But when the sum of all is heard, it amounts to no more but worm man striving with his fellow worm for a thing of nought, and gaining a victory which can never be more glorious than their party and cause are, the one a worm, the other *a thing which is not*, Prov. xxxiii. 5.

But behold an encounter of faith, worm Jacob wrestling with the Mighty God, the angel of the covenant, Jesus Christ, and that for the divine blessing. Both the party and the cause are great without a parallel, and the victory falls to the weak side. *And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* In these words we see,

Jacob bringing the matter of the struggle to a precise point. They had wrestled all or a good part of the night, and when the day was breaking, the angel desires him to let him go, but Jacob holds, and tells him, Thus and thus will he do it and not otherwise. A blessing, his blessing, or he will not let him go.

Consider here the great point in wrestling Jacob is seeking. A blessing, God's blessing. Jacob was blessed before, and he had used art to obtain it, even beguiling his father which was his sin. He must be blessed again, and he uses holy violence to obtain it, even wrestling with his God, which was his laudable duty.

Thus a person once really blessed will be concerned for a further blessing. None despise the blessing, but those who are strangers to it, and are near to a curse. If there be a soul that has got any access to God in secret duties, such persons will have an edge on their spirit for a sermon or communion blessing. And they will always be seeking more of the blessing, till they receive it in full tale, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, before the foundation of the world."

From the barren rocks the showers run off as they fall, while the fruitful field drinks up the rain, that it may bring forth more fruit.

It is surely a good sign when the heart of a man is crying within him to heaven, a blessing, a blessing, a spiritual blessing. The curse locks up the heart, and lays it under bonds, that it cannot stir nor move within the man for the blessing. But a blessing opens the heart for more, and presages God's opening of his hands. There could be no better sign of a feast to be here, than this, all the children crying hunger, hunger, hunger! *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.*

The blessing Jacob seeks from the man that wrestled with him, and had disjointed his thigh with a touch, but had not prevailed against him. But since the less is blessed by the greater, Jacob here acknowledges his superiority over him, and humbly begs his blessing.

We may observe that the humble soul is the most likely to obtain the blessing. *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble.* The valleys are refreshed with rain, while it runs off the mountains. And to the humble soul it will be said, *come up hither.* God's blessing does not fall by random into one's bosom; but they that get it see first the hand from which it comes. And seeing him in his glory as the bestower of blessings, they must needs be vile, and as nothing in their own eyes. "I have heard of thee, says Job, by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Isaiah speaks to the same purpose, chap. vi. 5.

As ever then we would have the blessing let us be humble and vile in our own eyes. There is no room for it in the proud self-conceited sinner. "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." The swelling botch of the pride of the heart must be lanced, and dissolved, before you be meet to receive the blessing. The unhumbled sinner's hands are so swelled, that he cannot put on our Elder Brother's clothes: and we cannot receive the blessing but in them.

There are two sights which you should seek this night, if you be for the blessing. The bright and glorious sight of God's greatness, excellency, majesty and holiness. Look to his works, look to his word for it. Look and look again, till your souls be made to say within you, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" The other is the black and dismal sight of your own vileness and unworthiness. Look through the holy spiritual law for this, and then through thy disorderly life and heart. Look and

look again, till thou be filled with self-abhorrence, and get a humbling view of your righteousness as well as your unrighteousness, and then you will come empty handed for the blessing, to buy without money, and without price, that is, purely to beg it for the Lord's sake.

The man from whom Jacob sought the blessing was the man Christ, the God-man, who took away our curse and gives us the blessing. Now they that would have the blessing must come to our Lord Jesus Christ for it. *All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him.* This is the honour which the Father has put upon the royal Mediator, to be the great steward of heaven. When the famished Egyptians came crying to Pharaoh for corn, he bade them go to Joseph. This is the Father's voice in the gospel to poor sinners that would have the blessing. He has put the key of the treasures of blessings into Christ's hands; and whoso will have it must go to him.

Come to Christ then for the blessing to get it out of his hand. For there is no other way of receiving the blessing. "God blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." God out of Christ is a consuming fire, and they that presume to put forth their hand to God for it, but under the covert of his blood, will get a curse, instead of a blessing. We cannot receive it but by the hand of the Mediator, into which the Father hath put the blessing, to be communicated by him. When Christ ascended on high, "he received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them. Paul quoting these words renders them, *and gave gifts unto men.* As if he had said, we dare not meddle with the blessing to take it at our own hand, but Lord Jesus take it for us, and give it to us.

The blessing for which Jacob was so earnest, I think must be understood in a suitableness to his particular circumstances, namely the great hazard in which he and his family were by Esau, who was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Alas! what shall he do for this rencounter. He cannot think to fight him. His few servants, the women, and the young lads, his children were not fit to fight, nay, hardly to flee. Well, but a blessing will make up all this want, and the strait in which he was, makes him the more eager for it. I judge there are two things at which Jacob aimed here.

1. The ratification of his father's blessing, which he had received twenty years before. This blessing he took away from Esau, who despised it, and this was the great ground of Esau's quarrel with him. And now the time seemed to be come for the revenge of that quarrel.

We observe, that a new ratification of old blessings is a weighty errand to the throne of grace. Whom God once blesses they shall be blessed, but we cannot have the comfort of old blessings, without a fresh believing view of them. Let then old disciples and Christians of considerable standing, know that they have an errand at a communion table more than young converts and new covenanters. That is to get a ten, twenty, forty, sixty year old blessing newly ratified at this communion. God is saying unto you now, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me." Bring ye forth old experiences to be polished, and to get a new lustre upon them at this communion. And well may you do it, for it is very pleasant to the Lord, for us to promise well of free grace, and every enjoyment which a believer receives, he may call it Joseph.

Jacob saw he was like to run a great hazard for the cause of the blessing, and therefore he endeavours to be very sure of it before hand, reckoning no doubt that it would bear all the cost. They that are in hazard for religion had need to have a sure hold of it, that they do not run a risk for nought. They that suffer in the cause of religion, and yet are void of the life and power of it, are of all men the most miserable. Men hate them, because they seem to be what they are not; and God hates them because they are not what they seem to be.

If you have a mind to engage in the cause of religion, be sure to go through with, and lay a good foundation. The spirit of apostacy prevailing at this day will bring in a spirit of persecution, if God do not stem the tide. Lay your accounts with suffering, and since you must lay your accounts with it, labour by all means to have pennyworths, that you suffer not for nothing: but you have as much religion as will bear the cost of all you lose on that head.

2. A new blessing to carry him through the present distress. He was to meet Esau with his four hundred men, so he must have God's blessing before he venture out to this rencounter. He cannot face Esau without it. In solemn addresses to God, we should labour to have in our eye the evil world through which we are to pass, and the particular straits that may be immediately before us, and to get a blessing suitable for supporting us under them.

Let it be our errand to God at this communion, to get a blessing for our wilderness journey. Come in hither as travellers to an inn upon the road for a refreshment, by which we may be strengthened to go through the seen to the unseen world where glory dwells. Consider your own case, and be distinct and particular. If there be any duty or trouble before you more than ordinary, represent that

particularly to the Lord at his table, and seek direction, strength, and furniture for that particular. For our great Physician loves to see his people pointing to their sores.

3. We have Jacob's peremptoriness and resoluteness in this point. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* He had struggled long, and after all the angel offers to go without blessing him, for the trial of his faith and patience, but he will not quit his hold. His thigh was now disjointed; but though it should cost him more broken bones, he will not let him go.

4. The happy success. *He blessed him there.* The sore battle has a happy issue. Wrestling Jacob comes off a conqueror, and gets the blessing upon the spot.

Doctrine.—The way to get the blessing is to go to the Lord for it, resolved not to take a denial, nor to part with him even till he get it. In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall,

I. Open up this way of getting the blessing.

II. I will shew what it is that makes some souls so peremptory and resolute for the blessing, while others slight it.

III. I will shew that this is the true way to obtain the blessing, and that they who take this way will come speed. I am then,

I. To open up this way to obtain the blessing, which you may take up in these particulars. If we would have the blessing, then,

1. We must have a lively sense of our need of it. "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." It was felt need brought the prodigal home to his father's house. *I perish*, said he, *with hunger.* They that feel not their need of the blessing will soon sit down easy without it; they will, with the raven, feed on the carrion, and take up their rest short of the ark. But a pinching sense of need is necessary to excite the soul to wrestle with God for it. For none will ever come back to the Lord, but those whom felt need drives, not knowing how to live without his blessing and favour.

2. We must by faith lay hold on Christ the store house of blessings for it. *God blesses us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.* All saving blessings are benefits of the covenant of grace, and are given to the sinner with Christ. In vain will you stand at a distance from Christ, out of the covenant, and try for the blessing; for the falling dew shall as soon pierce the rock, as your faithless importunity shall procure you the blessing, without uniting with Christ in whom only we can be blessed.

3. We must by fervent prayer wrestle with him for it. How did Jacob obtain it? "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him." Can they ex-

pect the blessing who will not seek it? And can they seek it to purpose, who do not seek it fervently, as those who are in good earnest, whose hearts are set upon it. "Set me, says the spouse, as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death." And says Solomon, "yea if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Careless begging at the throne of grace does in effect court a denial. And where the blessing is to come, grace will set the heart aloft after it in the first place.

4. We must by believing the promise, keep a sure hold of the blessed Redeemer. He had said to Jacob, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered." And we find Jacob, ver. 12. reminding him of this promise. Now what way can we hold him and not let him go, but holding him by his word. They who hold him by his word, they have sure hold. Heaven and earth are not so sure as that handle by which the believer holds him. But unbelief makes the soul let go its hold, and the issue is this, the man goes away without the blessing. "Jesus saith unto her, said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God." The promises of the gospel are the conduit pipes, by which the blessings of the covenant come to the soul. Faith must suck at these by a believing application of them, or no good can come in an ordinary way.

5. We must by hope wait for the blessing. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say on the Lord." God may suffer his people to wait long about his hand, and to wrestle in the dark, before the day break, but they must be resolved to bear one disappointment after another, and still to wait. "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." They that turn hopeless of the blessing, are in a fair way to let him go without it. For the Christian is fed by hope, as the husbandman is, who will never sow his seed where he has no hope of a harvest: "therefore cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

6. We must leave no mean unessayed to obtain it, but use every mean till we find it. Song iii. 1,—4. We must go through every duty and seek the Lord through all thy trysting places, where he uses to meet with his people. Yea, we must go back again and again to the same duties till we find him. Duty is ours, but times and seasons are in his hand. And they may long seek and not find who yet will obtain a joyful meeting at last.

7. No discouragements must cause us to faint. Jacob wrestles on with his disjointed thigh, though the day was broken, and it was very unfit that the shepherds, who might be tending their flocks, should see what passed betwixt the angel and him. Yet he will not let him go, he will wrestle till broad day light, before he want it. Perhaps you may go to God, and with the woman of Canaan get no answer. When "she cried, saying, have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered not a word." Perhaps you may get a breast full of convictions and no more. Perhaps great objections may be mustered up against you, to dash your hopes of prevailing. But whether these objections be taken from the heaven without you, or the hell within you, you must not give over; but make your way through them by answering them from the doctrine of the gospel. When Jesus said to the woman, it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." But in case you cannot get through the objections, even step over them; if you cannot loose the knot, cut it, and hold on. Thus when Jesus told the woman, that he was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But instead of going away, *Then she came, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.*

8. If at any time we fall, we must resolutely recover and renew the struggle. Jacob's thigh is disjointed with a touch of the angel's hand, he is so far worsted, but he makes a new vigorous sally, and tells him he will not let him go, except he bless him. They that fall in this good fight, must not lie still, but rise again, and renew the actings of faith, in opposition to sense, and hope against hope.

Lastly, We must resolve never to give over till we get it, and so hold on. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* If it should be noon day, if Esau should come upon me on the spot, I shall never let thee go till I get the blessing. The soul must resolve to hold on, that nothing shall end the struggle but death, or victory; that if they die without it, they shall die at his door. This is the resolute struggle, this is the way to the blessing.

Motives to urge you to this way.

1. Consider the worth of the blessing. Whatever pains, and struggles, and on-waiting it may cost, it will far more than repay the expence of all. God's blessing is God's good word to the soul, but it is big with God's grace and good deeds to the man that gets it; and that is enough to make one happy for ever. It is the purchase of Christ's death, and therefore must be most valuable. God's blessing removes the curse of the law from off the soul, entitles to

glory, and in the meantime makes all things work together for good.

2. Consider the need you have of it. You are by nature under the curse, and unless you get the blessing, you must for ever be under the curse. But, O consider, how can you want it, how can you do without it? How will you live, die, or stand before the tribunal of God without it? Your absolute need makes all things necessary in the way of getting it.

3. If you will not be at this pains for it, you will be reckoned despisers of the blessing; and that is most dangerous, and will bring on most bitter vengeance. And you will see the day you would do any thing for it when you cannot get it.

Lastly, If you will take this way you will get the blessing. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." The Lord never refused it to one that sought at this rate. Never did such a one die at his door. Amen.

Galashiels Communion, August, 1717.

[Sabbath Afternoon.]

SAINTS WRESTLING FOR THE BLESSING AND OBTAINING IT.

SERMON XII.

GENESIS xxxii. 26.

And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me, ver. 29. *And he blessed him there.*

If every one here were taking the liberty to express the affections, and the present frame of his heart after this communion, it is likely it would be as Ezra iii. 12, 13. "When many wept with a loud voice; and many shouted for joy. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy, from the noise of the weeping of the people." So here, some would weep, some rejoice, while others as unconcerned spectators, who have not got the blessing, and therefore cannot rejoice; and do not miss it, and therefore cannot weep. But alas! it is the misery of many, they are too soon pleased. They begin with Jacob to wrestle for the blessing, but they cannot persevere as he did, and so they let the Lord go without blessing

them. The communion is over, but the blessing remains to those who have not yet got it, and more blessings to those that have got a taste of it; and therefore I would exhort all to hold on. In pursuance of the former doctrine we now proceed.

II. To shew what it is that makes some souls peremptory and resolute for the blessing, while others slight it.

1. Felt need engageth the soul to this course. You know what determined the lepers that sat at the gate of Samaria. Many see a want of the blessing, that find not the need of it; hence a few cold wishes for it, and if that will do, good and well, but if not they must even want it. But those that have such a gracious disposition as the person in the text, they cannot live without it. They say with Peter, *Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.* Now necessity has no law, and hunger will dig through stone walls, and if it cannot dig through them, it will leap over them. So the person who is in earnest will be forward to Christ in spite of every obstacle.

2. Superlative love to and esteem of Christ engageth them to this. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.* Love can endure any thing but absence, the loss of a beloved object, or of a token for good from them. Our Lord has appeared in his beauty to that soul, captivated the heart, and so engaged the person with the sight of his transcendent excellency, that he cannot take it back again, and he must have his good word and good will, and he cannot lift his suit till he prevail.

3. Without the blessing all is tasteless and unsatisfactory to them. "What wilt thou give me while I go childless," said Abraham? So what can competency give to satisfy the soul that sees the worth of his favour, while the blessing is denied? It is the blessing that makes all savoury to them, and the want of it is a worm at the root of all their enjoyments. The dove out of the ark found nothing but carrion, and therefore returned. A hypocrite will bestow a few faint wishes on the blessing. Lord bless this bread. This does not answer them. But yet they remain at ease, nay, they have more doors than one to go to. If they cannot come speed with Christ, they know how to do otherwise.

4. They see not how to set out their face in an ill world without it. They say with Moses, *if thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.* Christian Soldiers have no courage for a battle, if their Captain be not on their head. Without him, they are like Samson without hair, weak as other men. There are three things which bring them to this, they have weakness, little strength, and much opposition from within and from without. Duty is before them,

trouble is before them, and it is their care to acquit themselves well in both, and therefore they cannot think to go, unless he bless them.

Lastly, They see not how to face another world without it. David sings in the prospect of death, in confidence of the blessing. "Yea, though I walk, says he, through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff comfort me." But, O how can an enlightened soul take the passage to the unseen world, without a token, a pass for safe conduct from the Lord of that land. And therefore the person is resolute, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* I now proceed,

III. That this is the true way to obtain the blessing, and that they who take this way will come speed. *And he blessed him there.* Such as come to Christ for the blessing, they shall get it, if they hold on resolutely and will not be said nay.

1. We have many certain instances and examples of those who have obtained the blessing this way. Jacob in the text. The spouse, Song iii. chap. The woman of Canaan, Matth. xv. 22. and downwards. See also Lam. iii. 40,—50. and downwards. Would you know how to get the blessing? There is a patent way, behold the footsteps of the flock, not the footsteps of lifeless formal professors, who cannot go off their own pace for all the blessings of the covenant; but the footsteps of wrestling saints, who were resolved to have the blessing cost what it would.

2. We have God's word or promise for it. "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." Have you got the least hold of Christ, then hold what you have and do not let him go, and you shall have the blessing. A man hath no more in God's covenant than what he keeps and improves for God's glory and his own salvation. Now God does not set down all his children with equal stocks. There are fathers, young men, and babes in Christ. Some get more, some less, but there is a promise of more given to them all, on their holding hand to what they have got. It is God's goodness to many of us, that we get but small portions at once, and that any thing we get we know well how we come by it. It is necessary for our light hearts, that they go not vain; for our careless spirits to make us watch the more. But a little thing with a promise, if it were the least gracious desire after Christ, will be like the five loaves that were miraculously increased in the distribution.

3. It is the Lord's ordinary way, to bring great things from small beginnings by degrees. He could have made the world in a moment, but he took six days. At first there was but a rude mass, which day by day was brought to perfection. Thus the prophet

Elijah's servant was ordered to go and look seven times and then saw only a cloud like a man's hand, but it increased so rapidly that *the heaven was soon black with clouds and there was a great rain.* See how great a work begins, Esther vi. 1. In his works of grace, God observes the same order. The grain of mustard seed, Matth. xiii. 31, 32. soon becometh a tree. The seed of grace springs so leisurely that the springing thereof sometimes at least cannot be discerned in the time, Mark iv. 27. O how low may be the beginning of good, which the Lord will cherish and bring to perfection. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

4. Consider the bountiful nature of God, who will not always flee from them that follow him, nor offer to go away from them that will not let him go, except he bless them. If at any time he seem to flee from them, it is but that they may follow him the more vigorously; if he hold meat from them a while, it is but that their appetite may be the more sharpened. When the disciples, going to Emmaus, constrained Christ, he was prevailed upon to tarry with them, though he made as if he would have gone farther. Thus resolute holding cannot fail of the blessing. For good being of itself communicative, goodness itself cannot but be so. The spouse experienced this, Song iii.

5. None coming to Christ for the blessing ever got a refusal, but they that court it by their own indifference. And indeed a faint way of seeking, is to beg a denial. Our Lord is more ready to give than we are to seek and receive. *Open thy mouth wide*, says he, *and I will fill it.* He loves importunity and cannot deny an importunate suitor. And though some such have stood long at his door, never one fell down dead at it; but their long waiting was always made up by rich supplies of grace at length. The richest treasure is that which lies deepest.

6. Our Lord allows and encourages his people to use a holy freedom and familiarity with him, yea a holy importunity, as he teaches us, Luke xi. 8, 9. *Importunity*, Greek, *shamelessness.* Pinching need makes people shameless in asking. It is not here as among men, with whom a shameless seeker gets a shameless nay say. Nay, they that cannot, will not take a nay say, they shall not be troubled with it. Our Lord speaks a parable there, to excite his people to this holy importunity, to hold and not to let him go till they get a blessing. And it is to our purpose to observe five things from that parable.

1. Our Lord allows his people to come to him at any time. He does not fix them to set hours, but they may step forward at mid-

night, when doors use to be shut, Luke xi. 5. It was a dark night with Job, God had drawn a sable covering over the face of his throne to him, yet faith goes forward and draws it aside. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him."

2. Our Lord allows them to plead the relation of a friend to him, and to affirm kindness on him. This relation of a friend is particularly noticed in the parable, Luke xi. 5. A believer stands in many relations to Christ. Let faith fix on that relation, that will best serve its plea, and procure his welcome. And if he seem to forget the relation, let faith urge it notwithstanding, saying, "Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."

3. Our Lord allows them to be full, very full in their demands, lend me three loaves, ver. 5. Probably this was sufficient to entertain a friend on a journey, who was not to stay long, but let men blame themselves, if they be sparingly dealt with in the Lord's house. We are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels.

4. Our Lord allows us to think no shame to tell of an empty house at home. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him, ver. 6. The report which faith brings to heaven is always of emptiness; for they that live by faith are always upon short allowance, and never want an errand to the great Steward of the Father's blessings, for one supply or another.

Lastly, He allows us to borrow confidently without one word of paying again. This is plain both in the parable itself, and in the application of it, verses 9, 10. This is the way in which faith trades in heaven without money, for it drowns the soul in the debt of free grace, and can trade in no other market, for no other is fit for the pockets of Adam's bankrupt family.

7. And last place. As importunity is usually in all cases the way to succeed, so it has special advantages in this case, which promise success.

1. Our Lord does not free himself of such as thus hold him, and is not this promising? If a beggar be following and hanging about a man for an alms, there is always hope when he does not put him away. "Our Lord answered the woman of Canaan not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, send her away,

for she crieth after us." But, though silent, he would not send her away, and therefore the woman still had hope, and at last succeeded. He says indeed sometimes to the soul as to Jacob, *let me go*, tacitly insinuating that he will not go without their consent, and if they give it, let them blame themselves. But they will hold long indeed, before the Lord say, Get you gone. But if there were no hope, you would soon get your answer. For "afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

2. Nay, our Lord commands them to keep the hold which they have gotten. *Strive*, says he, *to enter in at the strait gate.* And is not this promising? I know that unbelief will be ready to shape an answer to the soul hanging on about Christ's hand, and will tell it that God's delay is a denial and therefore the soul may give it over. But it is better to wait on about God's door while we breathe, than to go back to the world to fill our belly with the husks which it affords. Be assured the Lord would not order you to keep your hold if there was no hope.

Nay, it is the Lord that hath given you the hand to hold him, and the foot to follow him. "For every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." If you have any real desire after him and his grace, or the least good motion, it is from himself. And though he should have no regard to you, he will regard his own good work in you. God does not open his children's mouth to put an empty spoon in it; but he that has formed the desire will satisfy it.

Use 1. This lets us see why many fall short of the blessing. They have some motions of heart towards it, and if it would fall down in their bosom with ease, they would be very glad of it. They knock at God's door for it, and if he would open at the first or second call, they would be content, but they have no heart to hang on about it, and so they even let him go without the blessing. The reasons of this are,

They have not the living Spirit of Christ in them, so they cannot follow the Lord fully, Numb. xiv. 24. It is but awakening not changing grace they have, therefore it decays by little and little, as the light after sun set, till it grow to perfect darkness. Their reigning sloth being only covered not subdued, rises again and overspreads the soul as weeds do a neglected garden. Take a branch and ingraft it, it will keep green a while, but if it take not with the stock it will wither, John xv. 6. Another reason is, there are difficulties in the way to heaven, which their hearts cannot digest. Few see heaven, and why? Ease is sweet, and the gate is strait. They

love gold, but will not dig for it. "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour." They see heaven afar off, and would fain be there, but there is a great gulf betwixt them and it, and they dare not venture to cross it. Heaven will not drop down into their mouths. Hence finding the fruitlessness of their attempts, they despair of their causes, and therefore set themselves to contrive excuses to sooth their consciences and give it over.

A third reason is, the world and their lusts were never made insipid to them, but still have the chief room in our hearts. Hence when the Lord does not answer them, they have another door to go to, unlike to those who say, *Lord, to whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* Here they find rest is sweet, and so they sit down, and fall short of the blessing. And thus many part with Christ, as Orpah with Naomi, going back to her gods, Ruth i. 14.

Surely brethren, this is a dangerous case. Well then, beware of it. Learn to wait, to bear patiently, and be resolute. And this brings me to,

Use 2. I exhort you all to hold on. You that have received a blessing, wait on resolutely for more. And you that are going away mourning, take up with no comfort till you get it from himself; and be resolute that you shall never let him go till he bless you. Have you missed him? Have you come short of what God promiseth to his people, what is necessary for your case, what you desired, and what you expected? Go from this place resolved to hang about his hand, protesting you will not let him go, till he bless you. And to encourage you to hold on seeking the blessing,

1. Know that a going foot in religion is always getting. *I said not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.* They that hang on about the Lord's hand, will always get something, less or more. Though you do not get the very thing that you would have, at first, you will always get something in the meantime, well worth all your pains. If you be for comfort, perhaps it may be kept from you for a time: but you are very likely to get a deeper conviction to prepare the way for it. If you be for deliverance from temptation, you are likely to get grace to enable you to wrestle against it. In this way did God deal with Paul. "My grace, said he, is sufficient for thee for strength is made perfect in weakness."

2. Religion is a reward to itself. There is a pleasure in attending wisdom's door. "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." There is a sweet peace in the way of duty; yea, the straitest ways of religion have a pleasantness in them. "For her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are

peace." There is a pleasure in seeing the bosom idol on the cross; faith and patience behaving themselves well upon their trial.

3. The more you hold hand to the work in religion, it will be the more easy to you. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." And if the Lord help you to hold on wrestling, you must not say, that you get nothing by waiting on him. For "in the day when I cried thou answeredst me and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." What makes religion so difficult is our not holding to it, but taking it by fits and starts. The oftener you are at the throne, it will be the easier to seek the Lord. But neglect one occasion, and you will find yourselves more unfit for the next.

4. You will find it easier to hold than to draw. Have you got the least hold of Christ? Do not let it go; if you do, you will increase your difficulty. When people slack their hand in religion, their work quickly opens out, and goes to wreck: but to be resolved to hold fast what you have, will help you to get more.

5. You will find that some difficulties in religion that are like mountains afar off, will be like mole hills when you come up to them resolutely. Thus the women that came to our Lord's sepulchre, "said among themselves, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great." God will make iron gates open of their own accord to his people that are resolved to be forward.

6. You will certainly get your wish at length. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." The longest and darkest night has a morning following it, and the longest hidings of the Lord's face, from a resolute seeker, will have a blessed issue. Hold on and go the little farther; assure yourselves, that if you have missed your communion, you shall have yet, though the table be drawn, and no more bread and wine upon it.

Lastly, The longer and the harder your wrestling and on-waiting for the blessing be, it will be the sweeter when it comes. "It was but a little, says the spouse, that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the cham- of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please." The people of God are very apt

to complain of disappointments; but though they are unpleasant meat, they are excellent sauce to an after meal, to make it go down more sweetly than otherwise it would. Amen.

Galashiels, Saturday, July 28, 1722.

SUITABLE IMPROVEMENT OF CHRIST THE APPLE TREE.

SERMON XIII.

SONG OF SOLOMON ii. 3.

I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

THAT this song is literally, although in a continued allegory, meant of Christ and his church, and that it is not all meant of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter; does the more convincingly appear from the description of the bridegroom as a potent king, chap. i. 12, and yet a shepherd, v. 7. and from the description of the bride as a queen, and yet a keeper of the vineyards, v. 9. and of kids, v. 8.

The words of the text are the words of the spouse, and the scope of them is to recommend Christ, and that from her own experience. And indeed Christians who have experience of religion in their own souls are fittest to recommend Christ to others. In the words we have an account,

1. Of an application which she made to him, in her own distressed case. *I sat down*, says she, *under his shadow with great delight.* In these three things are to be considered, 1. A suitable help in Christ, for her case discovered to her, *his shadow.* She was like a weary traveller out of breath, with the many difficulties, with which she had to grapple like scorchings by the heat of the sun, that was much in need of rest and refreshment. And she beholds him like an apple tree casting a broad shadow under which she might get ease. 2. The actual use which she made of Christ for that end. *I sat under*, or *in his shadow.* By this expression is meant the exercise of faith in Christ, as is clear from Psalm xxxvi. 7. "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." Faith is that grace, which by means of the promise discovers Christ's shadow suitable for a weary soul, and by which the soul comes under his shadow and special protection, and interposeth Christ himself between it and the

heat that is like to burn it up. 3. The manner in which she was carried to this exercise, *with great delight*, or *great desire*. Delight and desire are near a-kin, but the word here used, signifies rather eager desire, than delight. The original text runs precisely thus, both for the order and literal signification of the words. *In his shadow I eagerly desired and sat down.* The sense is, she was carried with full sail of desire to that shadow, and sat down in it, like one running from the scorching heat of the sun under a shade, or as the hart panting for water brooks goes to them to drink.

2. We have the result of this her application to Christ by faith. *His fruit was sweet to my taste.* She had comfortable experience of his goodness. She needed not take the recommendation of Christ and religion as a matter of hearsay. She herself felt, tasted, and fed. If any should say, there was nothing desirable or pleasant in religion, she could give them the lie, from what her own soul felt. If any should say the way of believing is a dry sapless way, commend me to a way more solid and rational; she could contradict them from the experience of her own soul, and it is vain to dispute against sense and feeling. She found in that way a fulness to her soul, a suitable fulness, a shadow that was good lodging, and fruit that was both meat and drink.

Doctrine I.—The way of relief for poor sinners, under all scorchings to which they are exposed, is to sit down in, and by faith to repose themselves under Christ's shadow.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall,

I. Show what need sinners have of a shadow to cover them.

II, Show how Christ became a shadow for poor sinners in this case.

III. Show what it is to sit under Christ's shadow. We are then,

I. To show what need sinners have of a shadow to cover them. A shadow is a defence against the scorching heat of the sun, of which they well know the need who travel in hot countries. This is that notion of a shadow that is aimed at in the text. Compare chap. i. 6. And thus it is applied to our Lord Jesus Christ by Isaiah. "And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." In another place he says, "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

Here then lies the need of the shadow to poor sinners. The world is turned a hot country all over to the sons of fallen Adam, witness the spiritual blackness upon all faces, Amos ix. 7. Adam's fall has

changed the temperature of the air which we breathe. God himself the sun of the world, whose influences were enlightening, cheering, comforting and warming to innocent men, is become a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity. He now darts his rays directly down upon the head of the sinner, so that the whole head is sick and heart faint. It is become so hot, that if a shadow had not been provided, this world had all been burnt up ere now. But there was a shadow timely interposed. "And a man, says Isaiah, shall be as a hiding from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

II. We are now to show how Christ became a shadow for poor sinners in this case. And here three things deserve our consideration,

1. He was fitted to afford a shadow from that heat, by his assuming our nature, in that he being God was incarnate and became man. "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." His human nature united to his divine in his person, was a vail to the rays of his majesty, through which sinners might behold it and not die. "We have now boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh." Hereby, as Job saith in another case. "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." And hence our Lord Jesus Christ was typified by the cloud spread over Israel in the day time in the wilderness, by which they were preserved from the scorching heat of the sun. The man Christ is fitted to mediate betwixt us and an offended God, for he is Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature. Good news to poor sinners in this weary land. There is a root sprung out of the dry ground, and it is become a tree of life; the name of it is the tree of life; and it casts a shadow, a defence, for guilty creatures under it, from the heat of wrath from heaven.

2. He actually affords a shadow for needy sinners by virtue of his complete satisfaction to law and justice. "For being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. Neither is their salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Hence Christ crucified is the sum of the desires of the soul savingly enlightened. "For I determined, says Paul, not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Reckoning that in him is all that is necessary to begin, to carry on, and to complete their salvation; and that being under his shadow, they have all within the compass of it which they need to make them completely happy. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him which is the head of all principality and power." How a crucified Jesus actually affords such a shadow to those that come under his shadow, will be cleared by three things.

1. He received all the scorching beams of wrath on himself, that so he might keep them from his people. "For he hath made him sin who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Why is the man under the shadow safe, but because the thick branches of the tree which make the shadow, do receive scorching beams of the hot shining sun which otherwise would reach him? The beams of wrath which should have scorched all the elect world, were contracted in the covenant betwixt the Father and the second Adam as in a burning glass, and so pointed directly against his head and concentred in him. "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. Yea, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief." There was nothing to interpose between him and them. "He trode the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with him." But they fell immediately in all their force upon him. "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." So that he did not only like Jonah faint, but died outright under them.

2. He exhausted them. He drank the cup of wrath from the brim to the bottom. So that there was no more revenging wrath to fall on him. "For Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Nor on any under his shadow, for an assurance of which we have the oath of God. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." And upon this our Lord Christ bids his people come away with him, for that now the storm is blown over on him, the sky is clear, and it is safe travelling for guilty creatures to the throne of God, Song ii. 10, 11.

3. And now through him, the comfortable influences of heaven are bestowed and conveyed to those under his shadow, through him as the channel of conveyance, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The debt is paid, he has got up the bond. The sun beats no more upon the tree with its great heat,

but shines upon it fair and sweet and will do so for ever; and thereby they under its shadow receive quieting, reviving, enlightening, and fructifying influences. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

3. He is by divine appointment made a public shadow for all the inhabitants of the weary land; so that it is lawful for them and every one of them to come in by faith and take shelter under it, whatever they are or have been. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There is heaven's deed constituting a crucified Christ the ordinance of God for salvation to sinners; to whom they may look and be saved, and that is their warrant. And the proclamation is issued out concerning it and registered in the book of God. *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men.* Alas! it would be small comfort to poor scorched sinners, if Christ were only a private shadow, like that which men have in their gardens, to which poor travellers have no access, it being within high walls and locked doors. No, as Christ is not the rose of the garden, but the rose of the field, which any person may pluck who will have it; so he is the apple tree among the trees of the wood, under the shadow of which whosoever will may sit down. "And the Spirit and the bride, say come; and let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Though in the meantime it is a sad truth, that such is the natural aversion of sinners to Christ, that till they be so scorched, as that not another tree in all the wood can shelter them, they will not come in under his shadow. We now proceed,

III. To shew what it is to sit down under Christ's shadow.

It is the soul fleeing to Jesus Christ for a refuge, coming unto him on the call of the gospel, and receiving him and uniting with him by believing on his name. And this notion of faith bears,

1. The soul being sensibly scorched and uneasy in itself. Though all may, yet none will come under Christ's shadow, but sensible sinners. "The full soul loatheth an honey comb: but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." They to whom the world is not a weary land, will not value the shadow of this great rock. The method of sovereign grace for bringing sinners under Christ's shadow is to make the fiery law shine full upon them and scorch them. It shines on them in its holy commands, set home on their

souls in its spirituality and vast extent, discovering the sinfulness of their natures, hearts, lips, and lives, till it makes them say in earnest, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we do all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have carried us away." The law scorches them with its threatenings and curses, and so beats on their heads, hearts, and consciences, till they are ready to faint, and say with the prodigal, *I perish.* Most part of men are like those upon whom the sun is beating and wasting them with its heat, but they are fast asleep, they feel it not. But awake when they will, in the fiery region of the law, they will find themselves sun-burnt and sick. "For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The holy commands will be no more as a sealed book to them, and the awful threatenings no more as the sounding against the mountains. They will find they need a shadow.

2. That the soul finds no shadow any where else. "Thus the prodigal would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." All the places of refuge to the soul, where it was wont to get ease, are in that day burnt up, and can afford no shelter. Flee whither they will, the house is unroofed above their heads, and their gourds are all withered, and afford no more shadow for them. Their creature comforts are dry and useless; they can give no ease to the pained conscience. The slender, moth-eaten garment of their own works, their prayers, tears, reformations, &c. cannot keep off the scorching beams of the fiery law from their consciences. "But what things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ." Thus they can find no shadow under which to rest.

3. A discovery of Christ's shadow to the poor outcast that can get lodging no where else. As God did with Hagar, when she had laid down the child for dead, "he opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad drink." So the Lord does with the soul in this extremity. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water." And this is that which is called in scripture *the finding of the Pearl of great price.* And never was the discovery of the shadow of a great rock to a poor traveller, ready to faint by excessive heat in a weary land, more welcome, than this discovery of Christ's shadow

to the weary soul. Consider that it is discovered to the soul as a sufficient shadow against all the heats that annoy it. *How many hired servants*, (said the prodigal when he came to himself,) "of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger." Bread enough, what an encouraging view! Jesus is able also to *save to the uttermost, them that come to God by him.* This makes the soul answer *yea*, to the question. Believest thou that I am able? And this will in such a case where the soul is pressed with a deep sense of sin, require a powerful operation of the Spirit of God to cause the soul to believe; however easy some may think it is to believe.—Christ does not heal them who were never touched at the heart with their sickness.

Again it is discovered to the man as an open shadow, and open for him to go into it. And by this discovery the soul believes God, believeth the Son saying, in the gospel promise, "I am the Lord thy God, open thy mouth wide and I will fill it. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." And until the soul believes Christ's shadow to be open to it, it can never go into it, more than one can believe on Christ without seeing a warrant, or embrace the gift of righteousness without believing that it is tendered to them in particular.

4. It imports that the soul goes under Christ's shadow for shelter and rest. This is the renouncing of all other refuges, and betaking one's self to the covert of blood alone; "Even to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." This is what Paul calls *the receiving of the atonement*, Rom. v. 11. *and the faith in his blood*, iii. 25. The word is the name of the mercy seat, the cover of the ark, under which the soul comes by faith in his blood, trusting and confiding upon it for shelter, life, and salvation to itself, upon the ground of the faithfulness of God in the promise of the gospel.

This is the coming under Christ's shadow according to the scripture phraseology. So says the bramble in the parable, Judges ix. 15. trust in my shadow, when believing it shall be a defence to you. So the Jews are said, Isa. xxx. 2. to trust in the shadow of Egypt. And their trust in that shadow their confusion, ver. 3. because the defence for which they looked under it, would fail them, and "they were taken in their pits, of whom they said, under his shadow we shall live among the heathen." And thus it is applied to the soul's coming under Christ's shadow by faith. "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." This is the receiving of Christ, even believing on his name, John i. 12.

5. It imports the soul abiding under Christ's shadow. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." She sat down under it as one resolved to stay. Faith takes hold of Christ to cleave to him, never to part with him, come what will, saying, *though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* And thus the man ever interposeth the obedience and death of Christ, betwixt heaven and his sinful soul. Keeps always Christ's shadow above his head. This is his only plea before the Lord, by which he can answer the demands of law and justice, and ward off the blow of the wrath of God. If he expects any good from heaven, he looks for it to come through the tree of life under whose shadow he sits. If he have any thing to offer to heaven, it must pass the same way. No communication with heaven but through Christ.

Use.—I would then exhort and invite you to come in, and sit down under Christ's shadow this day. Our Lord is spreading out his shadow to you in this place, and we are sent to call you and every one of you to come under it. Come then scorched souls and repose yourselves under Christ's shadow. I think you may all answer to that name even the most insensible amongst you, whose spiritual barrenness declares your souls to be a scorched and parched soil where no good can grow. More particularly,

1. Come under Christ's shadow, you who are under apprehensions of the Lord's wrath gone out against you for your sins, who feel a fire in your breasts, a sting of guilt in your consciences. Here is a shadow for ease to you, a covert of blood of infinite value, that will turn away wrath, give peace with an offended God, and pull the sting out of your consciences. "For the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin, and purgeth the conscience from dead works." No arrows of wrath can pierce you here.

2. Come, tempted souls, whom Satan is plying with fiery darts, ready to take hold of and set on fire the corrupt heart. If you sit down under Christ's shadow by faith, it will be a defence to you. "Above all then take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." You are annoyed on every side with fiery flying serpents, look to the brazen serpent on the pole of the gospel. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."

3. Come, you whose souls are pining and withering away within you, for want of the kindly influences of heaven on them. Here is a reviving and refreshing shadow for you. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." This

shadow will put sap in the bones, that are burnt as an hearth, a freshness in the heart that is withered as the grass, and render those who are faint, indisposed and inactive in their souls, lively and vigorous, like a giant refreshed with wine.

4. Come, you whose corruptions are rampant, and like summer vermin are destroying every green thing in or about you. Christ's shadow will cool the distempered heat of your souls, and reduce them to a holy temperature. "The grace of God teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world." The sanctifying virtue of his blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit, is able to master the strongest lusts. "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Ah! why do you go to swim in the waters of sin, for cooling of that hellish heat of lusts, where you are every moment in hazard of being swallowed up, while there is such a shadow for you to repose yourselves under.

5. Come, you to whom this world is made a weary land with the scorching heat of troubles, with which you are still meeting in it. "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." You are full of complaints of the hardships which you are made to undergo in the world. Trouble on your bodies, vexations in your minds, crosses and losses in your means, reproaches on your names. No ease can you find, however you shift about for it. The Lord lets the sun beat thus on your heads, to drive you under his shadow. Comply then with the design of providence, by coming under this shadow.

Lastly, Come all of you, whatever your case be.

Motive 1. There is no safe living without this shadow. The curse of the fiery law, and the wrath of God will burn up those that are without. And how can you be able to deal with an absolute God. "For who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

2. There is access for you to come under it, whatever your case be. There is a virtue in Christ's shadow, for helping the worst of cases. Wherefore despise not your own mercy. *Him that cometh unto me*, saith Jesus, *I will in no wise cast out.*

Lastly, There will not always be access. You are now highly privileged, God has set before you an open door. There is no shadow for fallen angels, no shadow now for the damned, and many even in this world, know not that there is a shadow for them. But it is offered to you now, and you know not how soon the door may be shut. *Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.* Amen.

Galashiels, Sabbath afternoon, July 29, 1722.

SUITABLE IMPROVEMENT OF CHRIST THE APPLE TREE.

SERMON XIV.

SONG OF SOLOMON ii. 3.

I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

DOCTRINE.

CHRIST'S fruit relisheth well with those who, by faith, sit down under his shadow.

In treating this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew some things imported in it.

II. Shew what are Christ's fruits, which are so sweet to the taste of those that sit under his shadow.

III. Why Christ's fruit relisheth so well with those who by faith do partake of it. We are then,

I. To shew some things imported in this doctrine.

1. It imports that there is in Christ Jesus a suitable fulness for the soul. "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." There is nothing wanting in him to make the soul happy. This tree of life affords not only a defence from evil by its shadow, but full provision by its fruits not only a shelter from the scorching heat, but food for the hungry soul. Christ's shadow is a defence to all under it, from the revenging wrath of God, that it shall never fall on them. Of them God says, *I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.* It is a defence from the curse of the fiery law, that it can no more reach them. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* It is a defence also from the evil of afflictions, that these shall not hurt them in the end, but turn to their profit. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

But then he is not a shadow or defence, out of which one may be starved by hunger; but in him there is fruit to satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul, so that in him, one may find at once a defence from evil and store of good. "I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said.

thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. Hearken diligently, saith the Lord, unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Hence they who withdraw from him are without excuse. "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?"

2. They must put themselves under the covert of his blood and righteousness, who would partake of his fruits. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." There is no access to the wedding feast without the wedding garment, the white raiment of Christ's righteousness put on by faith. "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." All the guests are sprinkled with his precious blood. This removes the curse, which made the heavens as brass above them, and gives them access to the fruits. Guilty creatures cannot have access to, or communion with God but through the Mediator, and in him they have access to *be filled with all the fulness of God.*

3. Those to whom Christ is a shadow and defence from the wrath of God and curse of the law he also feeds. There is no separating of the justifying blood and sanctifying Spirit. Many would be content to be called by Christ's name, and yet eat their own bread. They would have the benefit of Christ's shadow for their defence, but in the mean time the vain world, and their own fulsome lusts for their provisions. But deceive not yourselves, if Christ be indeed a rest to thy conscience, he will also be a rest to thy heart. If you be indeed come under Christ's shadow, your heart will be saying within you, "whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." As if he had said, bring nothing along with you for your provision, but come to the Lord for all.

4. When we sit down under Christ's shadow by faith, it corrects the vitiated taste, cools the distempered heat of the soul, and brings it to a holy temperature; so as spiritual things which before were tasteless as the white of an egg, become sweet to their taste. This takes place when Christ sends his servants, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus." And so it is a good sign where the soul's esteem of Christ and of his

benefits is raised above all things else. *Unto them that believe he is precious.*

Lastly, Faith, trust, and confidence, in the Lord Jesus Christ, produce sweet experience at length of the Lord's goodness to the soul. This is the way the soul sucks the sweet and nourishment out of the precious promises, while unbelief as it expects nothing from him, gets as little. We have David's experience clear on this head. "The Lord, says he, is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him." Trust reposed in a generous man is a strong tie on him to answer the expectation of the party trusting him. Thus Lot would rather expose his own daughters to the very greatest indignity, than expose the men to any harm, who had come under the shadow of his roof for protection. And we have God's promise concerning those who put their trust under Christ's shadow. "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame." They shall not be ashamed as men are when their expectations are disappointed. We are,

II. To shew what are Christ's fruits which are so sweet to the taste of those that sit under his shadow. These are all the benefits, privileges, graces, comforts, and fulness of the covenant, making his people happy here and hereafter. Christ himself is the tree that bears them from the least to the greatest; the promises are the branches upon which they grow, and faith is the hand that pulls them. They were all purchased by Christ, and it is in him and through him that they are enjoyed. A particular enumeration of them I will not attempt, but shall only mention a few things in general.

1. There is an inexhaustable fulness of them that will serve to feed all the saints, in time and through all the ages of eternity. Therefore they are called the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph. iii. 8. Behold the top branch and the fruit with which it is laden. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Here is grace and glory, relative grace, pardon of sin, peace with God, adoption into his family; inherent grace, the restoration of the image of God, the continuation of it, the perfecting of it. Here is all the soul is capable to desire, an infinite fulness, even all the fulness of God, in respect of which all created fulness bears not the proportion of one drop of water to the ocean.

2. There is a variety of them, suited to all the possible cases of those that are under Christ's shadow. "The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved. Behold a cluster of them. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Are they weak and unable to guide themselves? He *is wisdom*. Are they unable to pay the debt of righteousness to the law, by doing and suffering? He *is righteousness*, full and complete righteousness to them. Are they unholy? He *is sanctification* to them, in him all their well springs of holiness are, and from him they shall have a life of holiness, and live more abundantly, till at length they be made like him in the perfection of which they are capable. Are they yet under many wants and weaknesses? He is *redemption*, to set them free from all vestiges of imperfection. We now proceed,

III. To shew why Christ's fruit relisheth so well with those who by faith do partake of it.

1. Because it is suitable to their case, which drove them under Christ's shadow. What brought them there but felt need of supply for their perishing souls. Bread is sweet to the hungry man, and drink to him that is scorched with thirst. And Christ, and every thing in Christ, is sweet to the hungry soul, that could get nothing suitable to its case till it came thither. *The full soul loatheth an honeycomb: but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.* And what is the reason, that so few relish that sweetness which is in Christ, but because they have not been brought to a sense of their need of him.

2. Because this fruit is proper food for their new nature. *If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.* And if a man be a new creature, he must have new nourishment, he cannot feed as he was wont. He has new desires, a new appetite, and a new relish. For he desires that which is agreeable to the new nature, and tends to the support and maintenance of it. And that is Christ only and his benefits. Thus he says to us, *Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

3. Because the real experience of Christ's fruits communicated to the soul, always leaves a sweet relish of them behind it. Therefore says the apostle Peter, "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Come and see, is the most powerful persuasive to the love of religion, therefore says the Psalmist, *O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him.* Men's

Ettrick, February 9, 1718.

THE SINS OF SINNERS FINDING THEM OUT.

[Several Sermons.]

SERMON XV.

NUMBERS xxxii. 23.

And be sure your sin will find you out.

THIS verse contains a fair warning which Moses gives to the Reubenites, in case they should dare to be false in the business in hand. This warning hath two parts.

1. A protestation, in which he solemnly declares, that they should be guilty before God, in case they acted falsely, and should desert their brethren in the wars of Canaan. He tells them God is their party, and so doing they would not only wrong their brethren, which they might think was all, but they would dishonour God and make him their enemy. *Behold, ye have sinned against the Lord.* As if he had said, Remember you will affront God by it, and bring guilt upon your consciences before the Lord. We may here observe that in all sinful practices, God is the great object with whom we have to do as the offended party. Thus when David had defiled Bathsheba, and murdered Uriah, and thus awfully injured them both, yet in confessing his guilt he says, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." Iniquity does not only spread its offence on earth, but it strikes against heaven too, and that chiefly.

2. In the warning there is a certification, in which he assures them that God and they should reckon for it in case they acted falsely. Here the end of that sinful practice is represented, *Your sin has found you out.* This implies that they would as it were hide themselves from their sin, when they had committed it, they would make many shifts to soothe themselves and cover the matter. They would take the sinful sweet of it, and when they had done this, they would stave off the blame, shame, and punishment of it. But in vain. He assures them it shall dog them at the heels, till it overtake and find them out. He gives them proper notification that this would be the end of it. *Be sure your sin will find you out.* Know you your sin: it shall find you out. Think on it beforehand, that it will get up with you at length. This is the nature of sin,

will not hide by any means always, under any cover but one, the righteousness of a Redeemer. Let sinners bury it if they can, let them dig deep as hell to hide it, it will have a resurrection, it will appear sooner or later as a terrible ghost to them. *And be sure your sin will find you out.*

Doctrine—One time or other sin will find out the sinner.

In prosecuting this doctrine I shall,

I. Show how sinners shift this meeting, that their sins may not find them out.

II. In what respects sin shall find out the sinner.

III. Whence it is that sin certainly will find out the sinner. I am then,

I. To show how sinners shift this meeting, that their sins may not find them out. Sinners are in their hearts utterly averse to be found out by their sins, and they have many shifts for that vain purpose.

1. They will excuse and justify their sin as if there were no evil in them. They will cast some fair cloak over foul actions, that their sin may pass for a lawful thing. Thus Saul and his army, "took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord God in Gilgal." This was their pretence to cover their covetousness. This in many cases is done in the world; persons defending their sinful practices and will not be convinced of the evil of them. And even in other cases, persons may attain to such a degree of blindness, that they get their consciences soothed in atrocious crimes, as if there were little or no evil in them. "God gives them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

2. They will carry the matter so quickly as that it shall be hid from the eyes of the world, while in the meantime God's watchful eye is still upon them, though they do not regard it. "And Ephraim said, yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin." Many make such use of secred places and darkness, for their wicked purposes, as will banish them out of God's secret place, and bring them into eternal darkness, if a miracle of grace pluck not the brands out of the burning, and their sin in time find them out, Job xxiv. 15, 16.

3. They will deny it when charged upon them, and so cover one sin with another. "They wipe their mouth and say we have done no wickedness." O what pains do many take to ruin their own souls. Credit before the world is bought at prodigious rates of soul, and consciences, lies, and perjury. It is no wonder the con-

sciences of some be dead and seared as with a hot iron, when they so often speak in opposition to them, to cover their sins.

Lastly, They will keep out of the way, where their sin is most likely to find them out. They live strangers to themselves, dare not examine themselves impartially; they avoid communing with their own hearts and consciences as with their greatest enemy. And there is no doubt that this makes many to apostatize and give up with all duties of religion, especially secret duties, for they have no confidence in God, and their hearts condemn them. We now proceed,

II. To show in what respects sin shall find out the sinner. An offended God appoints the meeting, and will see it kept, so as the sinner shall not always shift, but his sin shall give him a dreadful after-meeting. And that often in time, always in eternity. The sin of Cain, of Saul, of Judas, soon found them out. And what many have hoped to cover, has been to their confusion discovered before the world. But however long the meeting may be put off, it will never be put off beyond death, there is a day coming will declare the secrets of sinners; *for in* that day God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. And God makes the sins of some to find them out in time, that it may appear there is a God to judge on earth, and he allows others to go on, that it may appear there is an after reckoning.

Now God makes sin find out the sinner,

1. By discovering and bringing to light their works of darkness. "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known." They havet oo strong a party, that have a watchful eye of providence to wrestle against in hiding their sin. God can employ a bird of the air to carry the voice, yea, can make the sinner as he did Judas put out himself, and turn his own accuser. Joseph's brethren got their sin covered for several years, and when they thought they were out of hazard of meeting, it, it appears to them in Egypt like a terrible ghost.

By laying the shame of it upon their faces before the world, as he has done with many who thought themselves secure enough from it, "Fill their faces, says the Psalmist, with shame, that they might seek thy name, O Lord." God has so united sin and shame together, that shame shall certainly follow sin, in time or in eternity. Many are a shame to the profession of Christianity, but God will at length turn it back on themselves. They think much to bear their shame now in time, but how much more confounding will it be, to have their shame proclaimed before the world of angels and men at the great day, after which impenitent sinners shall never lift up their head. Thus "they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt."

3. By presenting sin in its native colours to their awakened consciences. This the Lord did with Cain and Judas. Satan and the wicked heart dress up sin in such a manner as it appears lovely to the sinner. But the day will come, when God will tear off the false ornaments, the paint and the varnish from it, and make it appear the most horrible spectacle that ever the sinner saw. The thirty pieces of silver made a horrid treachery to appear small to Judas; but when his conscience awakened on him, it was guilt that sunk him, he was not able to stand under it. So also Cain was made to say that his punishment was greater than he was able to bear.

Lastly, By giving them the due reward of his works. "Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The time of our life is a sowing time. Sin is a seed, that though it may be long hid under ground, yet will bring a doleful harvest at length. "For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." The brim of the cup of sin may be sweet, but bitter will the dregs be, which the sinner shall surely be made to drink. The hand of vengeance may be long in striking, but it will strike at length. And however easily the sinner may run into arrears, it will bring a fearful reckoning.

And God will make the punishment one way or another to answer the sin, so as the sinner shall find that his sin has found him out. God has many ways of writing people's sin in their punishment, that they shall be obliged to own that God remembers their sin against them, and sometimes as Adoni-bezek they are unable to say, *as I have done, so God hath requited me.* The Sodomites burned in lust, and they were burned with fire and brimstone. Let us now,

III. Show whence it is that sin certainly will find out the sinner. How can it be otherwise, if we consider,

1. That none can sin without witnesses, who will surely at length discover the sin. Let sinners choose the most secret place for their works of darkness, they have always two witnesses present with them.

Conscience within their own breast, is as a thousand witnesses, whose testimony one cannot get denied. *Their conscience also bears witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.* Conscience may be a very silent witness for a time, but though it be silent it is not quite idle. It writes down the sinner's wickedness and keeps it on record, which record will be read, when the sinner with his guilt is set before the Judge here or hereafter, when the books are opened and the black book of conscience among others.

The other witness is the omniscient God, whose eye is always upon the sinner. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither

shall I flee from thy presence?" Who can hide his thoughts from him that searcheth the heart? and to what place can the sinner go, where God is not before him? Darkness and light are alike to him. And how can the crime escape discovery, where the Judge and Lawgiver himself is witness. Little do sinners think of this, because God does not strike them down in an instant. But this witness will speak to their terror and confusion at length.

2. God has said it. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." It is then his will, that sin shall find out the sinner, and who can hope to hide what God will have brought to light.

Use 1. Of information. This lets us see,

1. That an evil conscience is a sad companion, and guilt lying within the breast unrepented of, will break out sadly at length, to the sinner's confusion. It made Cain a burden to himself, Gen. iv. 13. A good conscience is the sweetest support, and gives the greatest ease in the world. But no rack like to that of an ill conscience, completely awakened. Many a secret blow it gives the sinner, that the world knows not of.

2. God is a just God, and will not be mocked, nor can he be blinded. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Let men run on in sin as long as they will, God will call them to an account at last, and they shall see that God did not overlook their sins, though he did not presently strike. He has a concern for his honour and his holy law, which sinners trample under foot, and he will fill their faces with shame that do so, and vindicate his glory at their cost.

3. There is a watchful eye of providence over the world that never closeth, but taketh notice of all men's actions at all times and in every place. And he bringeth secret things to light, at the time in which it may bring most glory to himself, and most confusion to the impenitent sinner. God loves to take hopeless cases in hand, and when all probable means fail, then to stretch forth his own arm and work, that it may be seen that it is his own work.

Use 2. Of warning. I would hence warn all,

1. To take heed when you think you stand, lest you fall. The way of sin is down the hill, it is easy to go downward, but there may be broken bones before you get up again.

2. Please not yourselves in that you get your sins covered, and hid from the eyes of men. For though you may prosper a while in that course, yet your feet may slip at last. And if you do not

find yourselves sometimes catched in the snare, your sin will find you out, it will fare with you as it never did with any before you.

Indulge not yourselves in secret sins, for the day will come, that what is done in secret, shall be proclaimed on the house tops. And hide your shame as long as you will, it will one day cover you in mercy or in wrath.

Lastly, Let us all labour to find out our sins, lest they find us out. We must meet them. Better seek them out that we may carry them to the sea of the Redeemer's blood, than to stay till they find us out, which may plunge us into seas of wrath. Amen.

[*Subject continued.*]

THE SINS OF SINNERS FINDING THEM OUT.

SERMON XVI.

NUMBERS xxxii. 23.

And be sure your sin will find you out.

I HAVE spoken to the two first general heads. I shall now proceed,

III. To inquire more particularly than we have yet done, into the Lord's making sin find out the sinner. This is one of these things in which the providence of God does shine most illustriously; upon which unbiassed spectators must say, "This is the finger of God, and verily there is a God to judge upon the earth." Consider here,

I. The general kinds of sin, which the Lord makes to find out the sinner. As for open sins confessed by the sinner, I need not speak of these, the sinner meets with them every day. But,

1. Sins which men will not own to be sins; the Lord makes to find out the sinner. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." The crucifying of Christ, the Jews would not allow to be their sin, in their blindness they denied the charge. But when the Spirit of the Lord comes, he makes them own it. Thus Peter addressed them, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren what shall we do?" In a time of defection and apostacy from

the Lord, men stand out against conviction, they will not take with their sin. But afterwards when God ariseth to plead, he opens up the putrifying sores and makes men's folly appear to them.

2. Secret sins to which no man is witness, the Lord makes them find out the sinner. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." The sinner pleaseth himself with this, that no eye seeth him. But God makes the world hear well of it at length. And what is done in secret, he bringeth forth in the face of the sun. How secret was Onan's sin, but the stroke of God reached him for it. For the most secret sins are open to an omniscient God, and he will make the sinner find it so.

II. The time in which the Lord makes sin to find out the sinner. Times and seasons are in the Lord's hand, and the time fixed by his providence is always the best time, and whoso considereth circumstances will be obliged to own it. The best time for his own honour, and for the conviction of the sinner in mercy or in wrath.

Sometimes the sinner is found out presently, God takes the sinner instantly in his sin. Thus "when Jeroboam put forth his hand from the altar, against the man of God, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put forth against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him." As soon as they go off the way, the lion finds them, as soon as they break over the hedge the serpent bites them. This is necessary to keep the world within some tolerable bounds of morality, otherwise profanity and wickedness would overflow all banks. Sometimes the sinner is not found out till long after. It was about three months before Judah's sin found him out: "When he was told that Tamar his daughter-in-law had played the harlot, and was with child by whoredom." Nay, it may go on years, many years, and never appear all the time, and yet find them out at length, before they leave this world. A person's sin may have as much time, before it find them out, as in the sinner's own opinion it may be dead and rotten, and in no hazard of rising to disturb them. It was at least long twenty years before the sin of Joseph's brethren found them out. Sins of youth may put off the rencounter till old age and death arrive.

III. The place, where sin finds out the sinner. Many times there is much of God seen in this, and God reserves the discovery always to the fittest place. "For he is a rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he." And he can make the sinner's own feet carry him to the place of this sad tryst, and heavy meeting, while he has no mind of any such thing.

1. God can make sin find out the sinner sometimes, where he can

have least support under the awful meeting with his sin. Thus God sent Joseph's brethren to Egypt, a strange land, that their sin might find them out, Gen. xlii. 21. They were now far from their friends and relations, who might have comforted them, under any distress which they saw them under. But stripped of all comforters, their consciences have leisure to toss them to purpose. Thus the sinner leaves God for his sin, and God leaves the sinner alone with his sin.

2. Where they may have least help to shift their sins finding them out. Thus there is no word of Judah's sinful companion, Hirah the Adullamite, when his sin finds him out. Providence it seems parted them on that occasion; otherwise he that had helped Judah to cover his sin before, might have helped him now, to have denied and concealed it, notwithstanding of the speaking evidences of it. Companions in sin are oft times farthest to seek when their help is most needed, and some time or other they will all prove physicians of no value.

3. Where it will confound the sinner most and pierce his heart most keenly. When Judah's daughter-in-law "was brought forth, she sent to her father-in law, saying, by the man whose these are am I with child; and she said, discern I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. And Judah acknowledged them." Here the sin was discovered publicly in judgment before many witnesses, in whose sight the shame of the foul fact was spread on his face. Thus God makes secret sins, which no eye has seen committed, find out the sinner publicly before many witnesses, and in the face of the sun.

IV. The means by which the Lord makes sin find out the sinner. There is much of God seen in this also. He never wants means to discover the most secret sins, which he wishes to bring to light. Sometimes this is done,

1. By the natural product of the sin, by which the sin is made to discover itself. Thus the sin of Judah and Tamar was discovered by her being with child. The bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen discovered Saul's sin, which shewed he had not performed the commandment of the Lord. Thus persons may go long on in sin, but a watchful providence makes their feet slide in due time, and their sin find them out, by fixing some mark to their sin by which the world may know it.

2. By some act of indiscretion and folly in the sinner himself. As in the case of Judah's signet, bracelets and staff given to Tamar. O the stupendous conduct of providence, in the infatuating of sinners, taking common discretion from them, that otherwise have

abundance of hellish craft and subtilty for the hiding of their sin. Yet their eyes are, by the just judgment of God, withheld from seeing, what otherwise might have been easily perceived. And this will gall them to the heart afterwards, that they should have acted so foolishly, unless their hearts be touched with repentance. But who can retain the prudence, which God intends for his own holy purposes to take from them.

3. By some unforeseen accident which the sinner by his own utmost diligence could not prevent. "Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." Man's capacity is but narrow, there are many things which he cannot foresee. When he goes out of the way of God, he may, ere he be aware, be caught fast in such a snare, as will hold him till his sin find him out. "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are caught in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." There is no safety out of the path of duty. When persons go away from God, they make themselves many enemies, for every person and thing are enemies to them to whom God and their own consciences are enemies.

Lastly, By making their consciences restless, till their own mouths discover their own sin and shame. Witness Judas. The Lord never wants means to make sin find out the sinner, as long as there is a conscience within the sinner's breast. Much secret wickedness has thus been brought to light in the world. And we have had instances of it, where the guilty were forced to turn their own accusers, when none was charging them with it; yes, and when to all appearance there was no true repentance for the sin. However, conscience may sometimes be commanded and held down, God can easily make it so turbulent within one's breast, that it will no longer keep the secret of their sin.

V. The way and manner of sin's finding out the sinner. This many a time is such, as must needs make men to say, *This is the finger of God.* Providence appoints the meeting, and wonderfully brings matters about for the keeping of it.

1. Ofttimes sin finds the sinner unexpectedly and surprisingly when they are not looking for it. How surprisingly did Judah's sin, and the sin of Joseph's brethren find them out. It meets the sinner like a ghost in a moment, when he is not looking for it; and catches him before he can get his sinful craft collected to stave it off.

2. Often does the way which sinners take to hide their sin, prove the way of its finding them out. "The Lord is known by the judgment

which he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." The means which they use for burying it out of sight, God makes the occasion of its rising upon them. How often have cunning contrivances of mischief turned on the heads of the contrivers, God catching the wise in their own craft, to his own glory and their confusion.

3. Sin always finds out the sinner securely, that there is none escaping, no getting beyond it, but the sinner is hedged in on every side. Cain felt the greatness of his punishment, but he could not escape from it. God's prisoners are kept fast, and though it may be long before he speak to the sinner, yet he will speak home at length. He may be long in beginning to reckon with the sinner, but he will make a thorough reckoning when he does begin. He says as in the case of Eli, "When I begin, I will also make an end."

Lastly, God's writing the sin upon the punishment, so that the sinner shall be forced to say, *As I have done, so God hath requited me.* Thus God makes men's sins so to find them out, that they cannot fail to see that he remembers such a sin against them.

Sometimes the punishment is the same in kind with the sin: as in the case of Adoni-bezek. The same punishment was inflicted upon himself, which he had inflicted upon threescore and ten captive kings. Thus many that injure others have the same injury returned into their own bosom, and are treated in the same way that they have treated others. Thus Absalom did to David as he had done to Uriah. Pharaoh slew the first-born of the Israelites, and therefore God slew the first-born of Egypt. Pharaoh would have every new born son of Israel cast into the river, and God drowns him and all his host in the red sea.

Sometimes there is a visible likeness between the sin and the punishment. The Sodomites burned with lust, and God sends fire and brimstone on them to burn them to ashes. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire, and they were consumed with fire from before the Lord. Jacob beguiled his father, by pretending to be Esau, and Laban him, by palming Leah on him for Rachel.

Sometimes there is a certain relationship betwixt the sin and the punishment. Jeroboam's hand withering, the belly of the adulteress swelling, and her thigh rotting. Companions of sin turning plagues and causes of woe to one another. Eli's indulgence to his sons was punished with the death of them.

Finally, Sometimes there is a direct contrariety betwixt the sin and the punishment. Thus God threatened the Israelites: "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with

gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron on thy neck, until he have destroyed thee." Adam would be like God, and he became like the beast that perisheth. David, proud of the number of his people, is punished with the loss of seventy thousand of them. The Jews crucify Christ to preserve their nation, and it ruins it entirely.

Use 1.—There is a God. The fool says in his heart and by his practice, there is none. But God is known by the judgments he executeth. When we see in ourselves or others, sin thus finding the sinner out, we should be confirmed in the faith of that fundamental article of all religion. And oppose it to those temptations to atheism, which the corrupt heart raises from sinners prospering so long in a sinful course.

2. There is a providence. That God is not an idle spectator, but a careful observer of human affairs. His eye is upon us at all times, in the dark as in the light; and secret sins are as open to him as those done in the face of the sun. Nothing can be hid from his sight, but every thing is open and manifest unto him. He looks on as a witness, and as a judge, and in due time discovers his hatred of it.

Lastly, He is a just God, that will at length shew himself terrible to impenitent sinners. He will call sinners in due time to an account, and though he spare long he will not spare always. The sinner thinks that because God does bear with him long, therefore he is such a one as himself, that there is no such evil in sin as is pretended, and because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sinner is set in him to do wickedly. But God will speak to the confusion of sinners in mercy or in wrath. Amen.

[*Subject continued.*]

THE SINS OF SINNERS FINDING THEM OUT.

SERMON XVII.

NUMBERS xxxii. 23.

And be sure your sin will find you out.

IV. I shall now confirm the doctrine. Here consider,

1. That no man can sin without witnesses. This has been already illustrated under the third head.

2. Consider that God both can and will make sin find out the sinner. How then can the sinner escape. Many a time atrocious crimes escape among men, because such as would, cannot find them out, and such as can, will not do it. But there is neither cannot, nor will not with God in this case.

1. God can do it. For he hath every thing necessary to qualify him to find out the guilty. He is privy to the most secret wickedness. "For the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." See what a discovery of secret wickedness the Lord makes to the prophet, Ezek. viii. 8,—12. God sees what is in us, about us, or done by us, however it be concealed. And with God the most subtile contrivances for concealing of sin, are no better than the silly art of poor children, to turn their backs and cover their own eyes to hide themselves. The thickest covers which can be made for sin are so thin, that they hinder not the broad view of the omniscient eye. Again he never forgets, nay, he cannot forget, because of the perfection of his nature, and besides he has interposed a solemn oath in the matter. "The Lord, saith the prophet Amos, hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their works." It may be long before a process be raised before the Lord; when it is called it may get a sist and delay, through the long suffering of the Judge. But it never drops out of the records. "For the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid." The Lord never forgets unpardoned iniquity.

God also hath all power to break through all opposition, which the sinner can by art or might lay in the way of his sins finding him out. For he is omniscient and omnipotent. The most subtle sinner he can outwit. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong." The most cunning deviser he can counterwork. "He disappointeth the de-

vices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise." And the most powerful and stubborn sinner he can break. "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him and prospered." No counsel can avail against the Lord, "and by strength shall no man prevail, the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them."

2. God will do it. For he hath said it, his truth is engaged for it. "God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said it, and shall he not do it." He hath solemnly said it under a protestation in the text. So that either God's truth must fail, or the sinner's sin shall find him out. "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known." And what art can hide what God's truth is engaged to bring to light? God says to the sinner covering his sin, as to Cain, *if thou doest evil, sin lieth at the door.* Like a watch-dog ready to take the criminal by the throat, whenever he stirs out at the door, and this dog though it may sleep long at the door, will rise on the sinner at length. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.*

3. It lies upon God's honour to make sin find out the sinner. Sinners getting away with their sins, run into a mistake to the dishonour of God; but God for his honour's sake, will rectify the mistake, though it will be to the sinner's cost. "These things hast thou done, says he, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee." Men of honour in the world are concerned in a special manner for it, so that he that toucheth it, touches the apple of their eye. And can any think but God is very jealous for his honour. "I am the Lord; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

The honour of God's rectoral justice, by which he governs the world, is concerned in this matter. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* Crimes allowed to pass unpunished, reflect on the justice of those under whose jurisdiction they are. The whole world is under God's jurisdiction. And how shall it be known that the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, if sin do not sooner or later find out the sinner. And hence it comes to pass, that those who are most dear to God, their sins find them out also. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned." This, therefore, is given as the reason of God's publicly punishing David, 2 Sam. xii. 12, 13. Though God answers his people and forgives them, *Yet he takes vengeance on their inventions.*

This belongs also to the honour of his holiness, by which he is pure from, and hates with a perfect hatred, all iniquity. *He is glorious in holiness.* If he should not set a mark of his indignation against sin, one time or other, where would be the evidence of his perfect hatred of it? Do not they who join in covering sin, make themselves partakers of the guilt? And does not then the spotless holiness of God make it sure that sin shall find out the sinner. The honour also of his omniscience and providential vigilance require it. Therefore says Joshua to Achan, "My son, give I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him." It is the perverse reckoning of sinners upon God's long suffering and forbearance, that leads them to say, "The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth." And therefore, either sin must find out the sinner, or God will lose the glory of his omniscience. The sinner in his secret wickedness, robs God of that glory, but in open confession he restores it, thereby owning that since God knows it, it is all one as if all the world knew it, and therefore he confesseth it before the world.

It concerns also the honour of this message delivered by his servants in his name to sinners. They are commanded to tell sinners that their sins will find them out. They are to say, "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." And it lies on the honour of God to confirm the words of his servants which they spake on the credit of his word. Thus it is said, "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." If sinners were not sometimes found out even in the world, men would turn atheists, and would not believe a word spoken to them in the name of the Lord.

4. History and observation afford abundant testimony to this grand truth, in the events that have appeared and do appear in the world in all ages. Many a practical commentary has providence written on our text in the shame and ruin of many a man and woman; although the brightest piece of it is reserved to be written out at the last day, when thousands of blanks that are in it shall be filled up. And,

1. As to history. What profane history, written by Christians, Jews, Mahometans or pagans, wants striking instances of this nature? But I shall confine myself to sacred history, where we have wonderful instances, first, of sins finding out sinful nations and societies. We have heard already of sins finding out the Sodomites and the Egyptians. The sinning angels wanted not wisdom to have hid their sin, if it could have been hid, nor strength to have staved off the meeting, if any such thing could have been done: but it found

them out, and put them in chains of darkness. The old world, it seems, thought the long tryst was fairly baulked. They continued in their usual courses, "Until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away." Thus the meeting was kept. The sinful Benjamites twice shifted their sins finding them out. Hence says the prophet Hosea, referring to the history, Judges xx. "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah, therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins." Accordingly the third time almost razed their name out of the earth. The Jews were appointed to give their land sabbatical years, Levit. xxv. 4. But through covetousness they quite gave up the practice, and thought it was good economy and lawful gain; but ere all was done their sin found them out. "To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah," they were kept in captivity, "Until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years." Afterward the Jews would make their court to the Romans, by crucifying Christ, but their sin soon found them out to their destruction.

We have instances also of sins finding out particular persons. How did sin find out the first sinner Adam, who would be as God, and became as the beasts, that perish, whom no tree or bush in the garden could hide from his offended God. Cain's secret murder of his brother haunted him like a ghost, wherever he went. David's secret sins of adultery and murder, were set in the light, and proclaimed to all into whose hands the Bible comes. Nebuchadnezzar's pride, who was driven to dwell with beasts, and Herod eaten up of worms. And many other such instances of sins finding out the sinners might be mentioned.

2. As to observation. Who sees not this often accomplished on others in their sight, or hear of it by frequent reports brought to their ears. What secret wickedness is there daily breaking forth, in some place or other, and set in the light, that has been done in the dark, and perhaps has been long hid. We have this day a fresh instance of God's discovering a course of secret wickedness, that for several years has spurned all methods of bringing the matter to light.

Again, who may not observe this in the course of providence with himself. How often does God make even the thoughts of the heart to meet the sinner, that never was ripened into action, so that all may know that *God searcheth the reins and hearts*. God often makes sin find out the sinner, when yet he does not carry the quarrel to the streets and blaze it abroad in the world. But it is that the sin-

ner may know, that God will judge him. God knows it, and makes the sinner know, that he knows and remembers it too, by some secret check, perhaps quite unobserved, or unobservable by others.

Use 1.—Of information. This informs us,

1. That there will be a day, in which God will yet plead his controversy with these lands, however long it be put off. The sins of Scotland and the sins of England will find them out, and God will treat with them as covenant breaking nations, whom he would have healed but they would not. The national perjury, blood of saints, contempt of the gospel, and profanity, with all the pieces of defection and backslidings, however covered and crusted over, will no doubt yet find out the nations, and all ranks of persons in church and state. And is never more ready to find them out, than when they are buried out of sight and people are saying, the bitterness of death is past.

2. When we meet with any stroke or cross dispensation, we ought to read it in the sin at which it points and humble ourselves, else we fight against God. "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved: thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return."

It should make us say, I remember my sin this day. And I think you and I both have reason to say so, when we think upon the astonishing course of providence with us this winter, in the matter of the Sabbath days, which God for the most part hath made heartless, half silent Sabbaths to us. O let us lay this matter to heart and examine how we have improved Sabbaths and public ordinances, since on them God has stamped such a mark of his anger against us.

Those whose sins have found them out have no reason to murmur, but to be thankful that God has checked them sooner than they thought. For sin must find out the sinner, and the sooner the better. Better now than in another world. Better now than upon the brink of eternity, or before the tribunal of God. Yes, *but ill is good on trust*, will the impenitent sinner say. But the proverb is ill applied here. For God will pay home the principal, with full interest for the time it has lain over, when he begins to reckon with the sinner, and then the sinner will change his mind.

Putting off the reckoning and delaying accounts pays no debt. Reprieves are not pardons. The debt of sin that is not confessed in God's way, and carried to the blood of Christ, to be swallowed up there, will neither die nor drown. The sinner will to his astonishment hear of it sooner or later, *It will surely come, it will not tarry.*

Perhaps it has already lain over many years, and perhaps it may lie over as long yet; but be sure it will find you out at length. Old sores that have not been well cured will readily break out, and old guilt will soon or late bring fresh pain.

5. Sin is a bastardly thing, that at sometime no body will desire to father. Adam sins and hides himself. Cain murders his brother but is averse to own it. So just and holy, so agreeable to the rational nature is the law of God, that the sinner is or will be self condemned. Therefore it will sometimes be a confounding question, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." Alas that we should be hurrying into those things of which we shall be ashamed, and lay up so much matter of future grief, shame and remorse to ourselves. Some indeed glory in their shame, but that brow of brass will at length be broken, when sinners shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt.

6. Whoever then will have the sweet of sin, must lay their accounts with the sour of it. They that drink of the brim of that cup must drink of the dregs of it too. God has fixed shame, sorrow and torment of heart to sin, with such strong bands that none shall be able to break. Where sin dines, judgment will sup. Wrath follows it, as the shadow does the body. The stinging serpent lies on the other side of the hedge of God's law, which they who break over will find.

Lastly, In vain do sinners fight against their sins finding them. It is lost labour, it will not do, for God is their party. It is vain for sinners to hide themselves, and hide their own eyes from their sins, for see them they must. *Yea, they shall see and be ashamed.* Men may close their eyes upon their sin, but God will open them, and make the frightful spectacle appear to them. Conscience will not always be seared, nor the mind blinded. God will take off the vail and say, *I will set thy sins in order before thee.*

It is in vain to hide these sins which God calls them to discover for his own glory. Secret sins, so secret as they give no scandal to men, God calls not men to discover ordinarily. But scandalous sins by which the name of God is blasphemed before the world, God calls sinners to make open confession of them, that they may restore him the glory before men, that they have taken away before them. And however sinners may struggle against the glorifying of God this way, God will not want his glory of them. For he hath said, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." And that is a heavy saying, "Who hath hardened himself against God and prospered?"

Objection. But there is much secret wickedness in the world, from which sinners get away, without its finding them out. This is a grand objection against the doctrine, from which sinners are apt to encourage themselves: therefore I will consider it, and in answer to it, offer these particulars.

1. There are secret rebukes and strokes which a sinner often meets with from the hand of God, these, though undiscernible to the world, are yet visible to the sinner himself. The lashes of conscience often go deep in accusing sinners. Many a fair face is often put upon the black heart of a guilty person, that blasts their sinful pleasures. And do they escape that are put into the hands of this tormentor? No hand was laid upon Cain, yet he complains that his sin was heavier than he was able to bear. Sins often find out the sinner, when it is not known to others. None knew that the sin of Joseph's brethren had found them out but Joseph and themselves.

2. Sin many times finds out sinners before the world, and though some escape yet many are taken in that snare. I need not repeat instances. There are some that God makes examples to others, and they that will not take warning by them, may themselves come also to be made examples to others, and from them, others will take warning. Hence says Paul to the Hebrews, "Let us labour therefore to enter into rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Though some escape yet you may be taken, therefore do not you adventure, in hopes of getting away with your sin. While there are so many whose sin has found them out in the land of the living, not only in their name, but in their persons, it is folly to go on securely in sin, expecting never to be detected.

3. Sin often finds out the sinner's name, when he is dead and gone, so that they die like a candle going out, leaving a bad savour in the world behind them. The name of the wicked shall rot. Their name rots with their bodies. God does with some sinners that get out of the world without sin finding them out, as some do with such as die by their own hands, they hang them up after they are dead, for a terror to others. Their names are as their bodies were unburied, left behind them for a loathing to such as think on them.

4. Sin often finds out the sinner in his relations or family after he is gone. God takes away the sinner and pursues the quarrel in the eyes of the world against them that are his. This is described in a striking manner, Job xx. 26,—29. This is also threatened in the second commandment. Sin not found out is one of the worst of legacies, which God to his own glory, takes the payment of in his own hand, to make all men to see that there is a God to judge upon

the earth. It is a consuming moth, that will consume substance, and erase the remembrance of sinners from the earth. See what God says to Eli, for the wickedness of his sons and his lenity to them, 1 Sam. ii. 30,—36.

5. Sin never fails to find out the sinner in another world. There is a tribunal immediately after death, where the impenitent sinner will find that his sins are not forgotten. *After death is the judgment.* But there will be a day of judgment at the end of the world, when secret things will be brought to light and laid open. "In that day God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Then he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Then the dead small and great shall stand before God, and the books will be opened." The records of the most secret wickedness will be read before the world of angels and men. These works of darkness, which now cannot be dived into, will be laid open then in their most minute circumstances, before the universal congregation.

Now judge ye, if any encouragement can be drawn, from some sinners getting away without their sin finding them out. You see that out it must be, and out it will be, if not in time, yet in eternity. And better now than hereafter, for,

1. Now God is on a throne of mercy, and if sin find out the sinner now, he may go to Christ with it, who will cover it with his blood, and upon the sinner's coming to him, God has promised, saying, "I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more." If the criminal fall down before his judge and submit himself, he will get his soul for a prey. "For if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But hereafter the white flag of peace is taken in, the time of trial is over, the door of mercy shut, and no more pardons dispensed. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are."

2. The most public place in all this world, is but a secret corner in comparison of that assembly that shall be at the great day. "Before the Judge shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." And what matter what shame fall on the sinner now, so that he may lift up his face in that great assembly unashamed.

Question. But why is it that sin finds some out in time, and that

others are put off to another world? *Answer.* The sins of some sinners find them out in time, for these reasons.

1. Sometimes for their own good and eternal welfare, that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord. The thief who was brought to the cross on the discovery of his sin was saved, when many others, no doubt, escaped and so perished. And thus it is thought concerning Ahab, that the discovering of his sin was a mean to bring him to repentance. Whatever God may do with others, one way or other, he will make sin find out his elect in this world, that it shall so toss them as to bring them to Christ.

2. For his own glory, that the world may see there is a God that concerns himself in matters done in the world as the Judge of it. "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." These things are real evidences of God's omniscience, justice and holiness. So that while the sins of some find them out, he leaves not himself without a witness. And it becomes a bar in the way of prevailing atheism in the world, striking sinners with the thought, that there is a God.

3. For a terror and warning to others. "And all Israel shall hear and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you." God makes examples of some, that others may learn wisdom by their folly. And therefore it says to all, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." This is the end of church discipline in public rebukes. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." And they are far gone in hardness, and must be very insensible of their own case, who are not humbled and stirred up to watchfulness by these means. And idle unconcerned spectators of these things, are very like to become a spectacle themselves to others.

But again, sin's finding out some is delayed for a time, and they get away with them even in the face of death; so that their sin never finds them out in this world. And this,

1. Is in wrath to themselves, they are given over as helpless, *Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.* Their punishment is reserved till they get it altogether in full tale. "How are they brought into desolation as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors." It is a fearful case when God allows accounts with a sinner to lie over, till he be in another world; and never brings him to a reckoning till there. I assure you God deals not so with any of his own. "But when we are judged, says Paul, we are chastened of the Lord,

that we should not be condemned with the world." It is a sign of a very hopeless case, when God ceaseth to be a reprover to a sinner.

2. It is to be a certain evidence and token to the world of a judgment to come. Were every one's sin made to find him out in this world, and he brought to reckon for it here, it would tempt the world to think there were no future judgment. But since so many processes are laid by undiscussed in time, it is an argument that the judgment will sit in eternity. And indeed, every one of those sins that sinners get away with, is an argument for a day of judgment. For since God is a just God, he must reward sinners according to their works, going on in their sin, and since that is not done now, it will certainly be done hereafter.

3. The mischievous effects of some persons' sins are never complete till they be gone. And even when they are off the stage, their guilt may be running on to a greater and greater height in this world, for all which they shall be made to reckon at the great day. So the mischief of Haman lived when he was dead. Thus Esther, after his death, "Spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device which he had devised against the Jews." Jeroboam, long after he was dead, is called Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin. So there is no breaking off of such sins but by the repentance of the party. And when he does not repent, no wonder his sin does not find him out till it be completed.

Use 2. Of Exhortation. And this doctrine serves to dehort from several sinful practices, and to exhort to several duties.

Dehortation 1. Beware of leading a careless and untender life. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Most men walk carelessly, they are as indifferent about keeping a clean conscience as the workman is of keeping the motes and dust off his clothes, who never troubles himself, as long as they do not come into his eyes. This is not the good old way of the saints, "who exercised themselves, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man."

Now that is a careless and untender life,

1. When a man keeps not upon his spirit a fear of falling into temptation. "Happy is the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." Many will be sorry after they have fallen into the mire, but when they are out of that, alas! they do not look before them when they come near another, as affrighted at it, and they are into that one too, before they are aware. O sirs! when grew the world so, as one might travel

through any part of it fearlessly, go into any company, and walk on without taking heed to his steps. There is not a saint in heaven that knew it so in their day.

2. When one tamely yields up himself, to be guided by his passions, lusts, and affections, and is not habitually guarded by reason, religion, and conscience. People may call this infirmity of the will, but they will never make less of it than a careless untender life, that will find them out, and make them broken bones, if God has any kindness for them. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." It was said of Christ, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the seas obey him?" But of how many may we say, What manner of a Christian is this? that the wind of passions, and the seas of temptation, ever command him and carry him headlong. By the smallest spark he goes up like powder, and by the smallest blast he is driven like a feather or chaff before the wind. Now beware of this.

Motive 1. We have a careful enemy that watcheth all advantages and opportunities against us. "As a roaring lion, he walketh about seeking whom he may devour." While we sleep, the devil wakes; while we stand still, he goes about us; while we fear nothing he takes the advantageous occasion to make his attack. Ah! shall not the diligence of our malicious enemy, rouse us to look about us and be upon our guard. Our souls are a prey, which he thinks well worth his pains to catch, and do not we reckon it worth all our pains to keep them?

2. Consider where you are. They that are in heaven need not watch, nor fear a surprise. *The gates of that city shall not be shut at all by day*, for no enemy can approach it. But you are not there, but on earth, where you are never out of hazard, alone, nor in company. "You are among the lions' dens, and the mountains of the leopards." It is the haunt of wild beasts. They have their dens without us and within us. One man may be a snare to another, and a man may be a snare to himself. There is a thicket of snares and temptations through which we have to go. We carry a body of death with us, which is like tinder, to kindle the flames of hell about our ears.

3. Careless walking is ungodly walking. "If," says God, "ye walk contrary unto me, (Hebrew, at a venture) and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins." No man becomes a Christian by chance, nor walks with God by random. The Christian life is a labour, a warfare, a rowing against the stream. Assure yourselves then that by careless

walking, you can never attain to the rest, the crown, nor to the shore of Immanuel's land.

Lastly, Consider your sin will find you out. Careless untender living often betrays sinners into some foul mires, the mud of which they can never wipe off while they live. How many have been set up as beacons. How many that have dashed themselves to pieces upon the rock of security, have *there* been set up as beacons to others. Ask David what betrayed him into his adultery, and he will tell you that it was his careless walking. And I believe there are few, if any, gross and scandalous outbreakings among them that profess the name of Christ, but they will be found to be the just judgment of God upon former careless walking, and what naturally flowed from it. Is it any wonder that he who walks in a rough uneven way, and will not look to his feet, should break a leg or an arm sometime or other.

Again, Careless walking never fails to make a poor case of the soul. Can the idle soul think to escape suffering want. There always comes a winter which enquires at the careless walker, What has summer been doing? Hence some professors have little or no experience of religion, but with good wishes and meanings, they go on all their days, like the door on the hinges they make no progress; they are ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth.

Besides, such conduct brings always some stroke at length, which shews that the Lord has not forgot it. It will one time or other lie heavy on the sinner. He gets either a merciful rousing out of that careless disposition, "Make me, says David in this case, to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice," or it ruins him for altogether, as it did those of Laish, Judges xviii. 27.

Dehortation 2. Venture not upon nor live in secret wickedness. There is much of this in the world; when persons find an opportunity and secrecy withal, they think then is the time to break over the hedge. And they may do it fearlessly for there is no eye to see them, nor will their credit be lost by it. Thus secrecy makes thieves, cheaters, unclean persons, murderers, and many other kinds of sinners. But, O sirs, be sure your sin will find you out, however secret. Venture not upon such things.

Motive 1. Are not God and your own conscience witnesses unto you in the most secret place. You cannot go from his Spirit, nor flee from his presence. The darkness of the night or some solitary place may hide you from the eyes of men, but can they hide you from the eye of God and your own conscience? Whither can you

go where they are not with you? Perhaps a child's presence would hinder you and will you own a God, a conscience, and not have so much respect to them as to a child? Will you dare the omniscient eye? Should you not rather say with Joseph, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

2. Many have thought themselves as secure from discovery as you, whose shame has been laid upon them, and they received the due reward of their work before the sun. And how do you know that the hellish trade will succeed better in your hands than in theirs? It is dangerous sporting with the all seeing eye. Take example by others, lest God set you up for an example next. And venture not upon the ice where so many have been drowned.

3. Secret wickedness seldom goes alone, but much more is often necessary to cover it. So that the person having once entered the devil's ground, finds a kind of necessity to go farther and farther in it. Adam having stolen the forbidden fruit, sins again to palliate it, by hiding himself, and indirectly laying the blame on God. David's adultery made way for drunkenness and murder. Lies in opposition to conscience are common in this case, so that one way or other conscience becomes like the highway, constantly trode upon, that it is no wonder it be quite dead for a while, till God put new life into it.

4. As long as you hide your sin and do not repent, the way is closed up betwixt heaven and you. There is a kind of excommunication from the presence of God passed upon you, neither will he be with you any more, while the accursed thing remains in your tabernacle. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." And hence it is some wither, their secret wickedness blasts them, that they pine away in their iniquity. Perhaps they think they can confess to God and beg pardon. But in any case while they go on in the sin, they can have no pardon. For thus runs the divine declaration, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And in the case of your wronging others, as by theft, while you are enjoying the fruits of your sin, you shall as soon pull the sun out of the firmament as get a pardon out of God's hand, for in that case restitution is a necessary part of repentance. So that the souls of many are in a case they little think. Thus Zaccheus, as a true penitent, was willing to restore fourfold.

5. Secret wickedness will damn your soul as well as open.

"There shall be tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." And O where will be your profit, if you should gain the whole world and lose your own souls? Is there any pleasure or profit whatever that will make up this loss? O throw not away a precious soul for what will not profit. It will be no comfort when men are roaring amongst the whole congregation of devils and damned spirits, that what they did, they did it secretly.

Lastly, If you will venture, be sure your sin will find you out, it will give you a meeting sometime, it may be when you are not looking for it. Your secret stolen waters shall overflow you at length, and your bread eaten in secret shall stick in your throat. And if you be so in love with secrecy you may get enough of it. God may give you your stroke in secret also, where there shall be none to help you; but you shall get the whole weight of your own burden as he did with Onan.

Some perhaps will value all this but very little, they know other things, secret wickedness has prospered in their hand long, and to this day, there are none who can lay any thing to their charge. But do you know the reason of that? If you did, it would be no great encouragement. "To me, saith God, belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them shall make haste." Run on then as long as you will, as sure as God hath said it, your foot shall slide in due time, here or hereafter.

Dehortation 3. Do not employ yourselves to defend or justify your sin, as if there was little or no evil in it; but rather lie open to conviction from the word of God, which is the law of liberty. This is an evil frequent in the world, by which men shut their own eyes, and drag their consciences at the heels of their self-will. They will extol some notorious sins as great duties. Thus Saul extolled his own sinful conduct in the Amalekites, 1 Sam. xv. What they have done, not because it was lawful, must be lawful because they have done it. Their credit is engaged, and therefore they cannot quit it, but must go forward and defend an ill action because they have done it. At least they will palliate their guilt by every mean, and do their utmost to extenuate it, when they find it impossible altogether to defend it. Beware of this.

Motive 1. This is a horrid profanation of the name of God to make a shelter for sin under the covert of his holy law. "These wrest the scriptures to their own destruction." This is to make God the patron of sin, and is like the wounding of a man with his own sword. Some have scripture ready to defend their sinful practices, and thus the holy word is abused to the defence of unholy

practices. This is a course as desperate as if the sick man should mix the antidote with poison, which makes his recovery hopeless. This is the conduct of ungodly men, "Who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness."

2. This course may well aggravate your guilt, it will never lessen it. It may blind your own eyes, but not God's. *Be not ye therefore partakers with them.* Jezebel caused a fast to be proclaimed, to palliate the murder of Naboth; Saul smothers the business of the Amalekites; but did these contrivances avail them any thing before God? Did not Saul see himself rejected for tampering with the command of God, and Jezebel was eaten up by dogs. Men may turn sin into what colours they please in their own eyes, but they will never make it any thing but the hue of hell in the sight of God.

3. It is a plain evidence of untenderness of heart, and will go far to prove a man hollow hearted before God. What less can be demanded as a sign of sincerity, than to be willing to know our sins, and our duty? "How many, says Job, are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin." They that are not willing to know their sins, are not willing to part with them. "That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." They that are not willing to part with their sins, deal falsely with God. What can you make then of aversion to admit conviction, but rebelling against the light, a staving off of repentance and reformation with long weapons; a shrewd sign indeed of a hollow heart.

4. They that take this way, lay themselves open to the fearful stroke of delusion, Isa. lxvi. 2,—4. Men that go about to defend their sins, though it were in jest, may come to believe the thing in earnest at length. "And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." For it is just in God to put out those eyes that men shut against the light. The more pains men take to cover and extenuate their sin, the heart is more hardened, the conscience more deadened, and at length it may come to a fearful height. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them."

Lastly, It is in vain to defend or extenuate sin, for it will come out and appear in its native colours. If we will not penitently draw off the mask which we have sinfully put upon it, God will do it and make it appear in its native colours. Men often do with

their sins as with their bodily sores, they roll them up with rags. But if God come to cure them, he will draw off all these, uncover the running sore, and open it up in mercy. And if not so, they will be opened up before the world at the great day. For whatever men think or say of their sinful practices, neither their sayings nor thoughts of them, but the truth of the matter will be the rule of God's judgment. "We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them that commit such things."

Dehortation 4.—Sin not presumptuously with a high hand in opposition to reason and conscience, checks and reproofs from word and providence. Sins of infirmity are common to all, unavoidable through the weakness of the flesh, and make the best go all their days with a bowed down back. But some venture on sin deliberately and fearlessly, and wilfully break over the hedge. Beware of this.

Motive 1. Consider God is the party with whom you have to do. He is wise, you cannot outwit him; he is mighty, and you cannot out-brave him. He makes the earth to quake and rends the rocks in his anger; and takes up the isles as a very little thing. In your presumptuous sins, you do but dash your heads against a rock. The head will be wounded, but the rock stands firm. He has given a law, he will see it regarded, and sinners will either bow or break before him.

2. Consider the awful fence which he has set about this law. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." They that travel in deserts carry fire with them to drive away the wild beasts from them. God has set a hedge of fire about his law, whoso will transgress must go through it. There is a net to catch the sinner, that he shall not enter the forbidden ground, but he shall be hard and fast in the snare. These are the threats of wrath, with which God's word is inlaid. You may make light of these for a time, but you will change your mind, and be forced to say, "Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our way, so hath he dealt with us."

3. Conscience the more it is trampled under foot, will rise at length the more violently and sting the more piercingly. Thus "after thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Men that war with their conscience may gain for a time, but the victory will at last fall to the other side. We may say of conscience as of Gad, "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last." And the more harshly it has

been treated, the more terrible will its resentments be. Presumptuous sins do but weave the cords, wherewith the sinner will be the faster bound. Sinning against light makes the way for outer darkness.

Lastly, Your sin will find you out. And likely, a sudden unexpected meeting it will give you. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Look abroad through the world, and you will see the truth of this written in the sudden ruin of many presumptuous sinners, whose triumphing has been but for a moment; who have run on casting off all fear and in a moment have fallen into the ruin, out of which they could not rise again. How many have run their course like the wild ass, "That snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her." So the sinners' month has come, when the foot has been taken from them, and their life and death has been like the crackling of thorns under a pot, noisy but soon laid.

Dehortation 5th, and last. Strive not against your sins finding you out. When the time comes that the Lord makes sin to find out the sinner, O what wrestling do sinners often make to avoid the meeting. They shut their eyes, and they will not see though God is writing their sin before them in legible characters. They will deny their sin when it is charged upon them, as Saul had the impudence to say he had performed the commandment of the Lord, when the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen were proclaiming his sin. If they meet with a stroke sent from God for the very purpose to charge it home upon them, they will say it is but a chance, 1 Sam. vi. 9. Beware of this.

Motive 1. In so doing you fight against God. He by his word or providence deals with you to own it, and you stave it off. It is dangerous entering the lists with such a party. It is the proper office of the Spirit of God to convince of sin, and those who ward off convictions set themselves against the Spirit to quench the holy fire and so run themselves deeper and deeper into guilt.

2. You fight against your own souls and wrong them. "He that sinneth against me, says the Saviour, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death." The boil that is to be cured must be lanced and opened up; and the guilt to be removed, must be discovered and the sinner made sensible of it, in the way prescribed by God. If you will not allow your sin to find you out, you block up the way of repentance to your own souls; and if you will not repent of it you must perish by it. Many times when the Lord is taking

the way to cure the sinner, he wrestles against it, as if he were going to kill him. But O does not the loss redound to you, if you gain your point.

Lastly, Strive as long as you will, your sin will find you out at length. If you ward off the first charge, another will come which it will be impossible to escape. If secret convictions and bosom checks will not do, you may come to get some heavy stroke, that may be more effectual; and if a small one do not, a greater will. And if nothing prevail in time, it will be so charged upon you in eternity that you shall stand speechless.

EXHORTATIONS.

Exh. I.—Believe this and think upon it, especially when you are tempted to sin. Know this to be the nature of sin, and charge your conscience with it, when you are tempted. Sinners often take time to think, even on the brink of temptation, that there is hope it may never come to light; but will you think, it is certain, that one time or other, if you yield to temptation, it will find you out.

1. This might be a notable mean to keep you from sin. O how averse are people to bear the shame of sin, after they have sown it to themselves they cannot think to reap it. But will you think on that in time. Look to the shame, sorrow, and torment, that are to follow sin, before you fall in with it: and assure yourselves that if you take the one, you must take the other also.

2. God hath said it, and said it to us, for that very end, that it may move us to hold off from the way of sin. Thus it is certain, it cannot fail, and thus we are warned and rendered inexcusable. We cannot say, it was not told us.

3. We cannot act rationally, or as reasonable creatures, if we will not forecast the event of our actions, which is so plainly and solemnly told us. How sad is it that men should be blindly hurried away by their passions into sin, and sink themselves in a gulf of misery without ever thinking that they are entering on a way that leads to destruction. A prudent man forseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on and are punished. Passions and corrupt affections are dangerous guides, because they are blind and furious and always for venturing come what will come. But religion and reason must guide the man, if he will act either as a man or a Christian.

4. How often are the dregs of sin bitter, quickly after the drinking out of the cup. No sooner is it over than the sinner calls himself a beast and a fool. He slides away pleasantly on the ice, but presently he is groaning out under broken bones. A little foresight would prevent this, Job xx. xi.—14. O were it not far better to

have it to say, I have not done what I was tempted to do, than O that I had not done it. Temptation casts a mist before the eyes when it is not resisted, which, when the tempter has got his design, often presently clears up, and the soul sees itself in a mire. This was the case with Adam and Eve, "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." And then what answer can one give to that question of conscience, "What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are ashamed? for the end of these things is death."

5. How often do the bitter dregs cast up long after the sweet is forgotten and out of mind. This was eminently the case with Joseph's brethren. Many other sinners have mourned at the last, when their flesh and their bodies have been consumed. Sin is a seed that may lie long under ground, yet will spring up at length, and will bring forth grapes of gall, and bitter clusters, which the sinner must wring out and drink. Sins of youth may set and keep tryst heavily with the sinner in old age. "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." The fear of this made David cry, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." And Job says, "for thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me possess the sins of my youth." O should not this be considered in time, and the conscience in the hour of temptation be awed with that, Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the end?

Lastly, It is the business of the tempter to keep this out of your view, as that which contributes to the marring of his projects. "For surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." And if you intend to resist him, you must arm yourselves with this consideration timeously. It will be in upon you, better take it before you enter the snare, when it may do you good, than after you are in it, when it will rack your conscience.

Exh. II. Search your own sins. Labour to prevent sins finding you out, by your finding out them. We should do in this case, as when one knows there is some hateful or venomous beast in their house; they search for it diligently, till they find it out, lest it should come upon them unawares and do them harm. No serpent nor toad is such a dangerous guest as sin is. Search it out then, and search till you find it out. And,

1. Make a serious survey of your whole life. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Go back the track of your whole life, and see where the prints of your feet are to be found out of the way of God. This will not be done cursorily to purpose. You would take a particular time for it. Men will take time

to adjust and settle their accounts with men, why not take time to settle their accounts with God.

Go through the several stages of your life. Neglect not to look into your birth and infancy. "Behold, says David, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Behold and remember the sins of childhood. *For childhood and youth are vanity.* Sins may be committed in childhood, which will find out the sinner long after. Cast up the sins of youth, it is a time of heedlessness and rashness, in which often much sorrow and misery is laid up for the time to come. "Know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Follies of youth may be the burden of old age, and must reckon for them precisely with God here or hereafter. Survey the sins of middle age. "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." And let the sins of old age be narrowly examined.

Search into the several corners of your conversation. Examine your way in your dealing with God and men. Look how you have carried in respect of the duties of religion towards your Creator; of sobriety with respect to yourself; of righteousness with respect to your neighbour. Trace your way in the several relations in which you stand, how you have behaved as a husband, wife, parent, child, servant, master, subject, church-member. How have you behaved alone and in company. What you have done for God's honour, and the good of others in the world. Ask yourselves particularly, In what case is your salvation work? What progress have you made in the work of your day and generation?

2. Search out particularly those sins in you that have been most dishonouring to God, and shocking to your conscience, whether secret or open. For these will most readily give you a fearful meeting if you do not prevent them. No matter though they be of an old date, for when the conscience is roused, they will be fresh and lively in respect of the sting. All sins deserve wrath, and will bring it if not pardoned; but some are more heinous in the sight of God than others, which providence useth to write over in the particular strokes sent for them. Therefore as ever you would prevent this, search them out till you find them.

3. Search out the several steps and outbreakings of that sin, with which you have been most easily beset and led astray. "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth most easily beset us." That is the special idol of jealousy, which provoketh God to jealousy, and which a holy providence ordinarily makes sinners smart for in a remarkable manner. So that as it has been a peculiar grief to his Spirit, he makes it also some time or other a peculiar grief to the

sinner's heart. Thus Eli's softness to his children, which seems to have been his weak side, found him out very terribly at length. God may pardon his own people's weaknesses, and yet may cause them remarkably smart for them, by taking vengeance on their inventions. So that in that respect horror may take hold upon them.

4. Search into those sins which you thus discover. *Let us search and try our ways.* Open them up and look into the lurking evil that is in them. When the serpent is found, rip it up to see where the poison lies. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee; know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." View them in the dishonour which they have reflected on God, in the multitude of mischiefs which they have brought forth to your own souls, or to others. Notice their several aggravations, the light, love, privileges, and obligations, against which you have sinned. Draw out the libel at length against yourselves, that you may prevent its being presented against you in wrath. Present it to yourself in its native colours.

Lastly, These things which you have omitted or done with a doubting or erring conscience, examine narrowly and strictly, for our opinion of sin can never alter the nature of it. The after reckoning of conscience is often the most true one. Thus Paul says, "But what things were gain for me, those I counted loss for Christ." There are many things in which persons have peace, in which they could have no peace, if they would narrowly examine them. And when they will not do it, God makes their sin to find them out, writing out their disguised sins, in such a stroke as sets them in their own colours, which this search might be a proper means to prevent.

Motive 1. If there be a way under heaven to prevent sin's finding out the sinner in wrath, this is it. "For if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged." It is the way amongst men, for one judge to enter a process against a transgressor of the laws and to discern against him, to keep him out of the hands of one that would be more severe. Take you the same course in your own process. Erect a tribunal within your own breast, place conscience on the judgment-seat, let it narrowly examine the cause and pass an impartial sentence, if you would be safe. If not, the day will come when you will find that your own indulgence to yourselves has ruined you.

2. In case providence see it meet to make some stroke to overtake you, even for that sin or sins which you have acknowledged

and lamented aforehand, yet you shall have more comfort in that case, and it shall be less than otherwise it would have been. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." Remarkable is the difference of these two laws, Exod. xxii. 1.—4. "If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and shall kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. But if the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double." The reason of this difference, where the sin was more complete, the punishment was greater; where less, it was less. So that there shall ever be found an advantage of taking this course.

Lastly, It is impossible but your sin and you must meet. And where there is no shifting of the meeting, sure it is the wisest course to yield to it in time. If a besieged city can by no means hold out, it is the best way to keep things from an extremity presently to yield. "Agree then with thine adversary quickly; whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

Exh. 3d and last. Repent then and turn from your sins unto God. Give up with your sinful courses and ways. Let the consideration of the bitterness that will be in the end of it, move you to put an end to them with all speed. For escape as long as you will otherwise, be sure your sin will find you out at last.

Motive 1. As your sin goes on, your accounts increase, and while they are making one treasure, God is making another. "Thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." None of your sins are forgotten, as long as they are not forgiven; neither are they forgiven while you are going on in them. And it is a miserable office to be increasing your debts to divine justice, taking no proper means to be delivered from the burden.

2. You will be brought to a reckoning for them all. "For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Sin is a debt that will neither die nor drown, but in the sea of the Redeemer's blood. And the longer the reckoning be delayed, it will be the more dreadful when it comes. Judgment that comes slow with feet of lead, strikes with iron hands when it comes. Therefore break off your sinful

course in time, lest your sin overtake you, when there will be no remedy.

As many unrepented and unforsaken sins as hang about you, so many snares and traps are for your ruin. And when God begins to reckon for one, he may reckon for all with you. *When I begin*, says he, *I will also make an end.* It is often with the sinner in this case as with a man when he breaks; all his creditors come on him one after another, when once one begins. And thus the ruin of some is completed, and heavy is the case of others made.

Question. What should one do, whose sin is, or has already found him out?

1. Bless God and be thankful that he ceaseth not to be a reprover to you. It is a fearful case where the Lord lays the reins on the sinner's neck, and will not bestow a check upon him. "And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth," said God to Ezekiel, that thou shalt be dumb and shalt not be to them a reprover, for they are a rebellious house. It is a token for good when the Lord checks the sinner, and restrains him, and causes the serpent to bite him as soon as he goes over the hedge. The child whom the parent is most concerned to educate right, gets many faults shown him and frequent checks. Despise not your own mercy, but fall in with it.

2. Carefully pursue any providential hint that God makes to you of sins and faults in your way. "A reproof entereth more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool." Be taught by slender means, if you would not provoke God to teach you by more severe handling. A tender conscience will be taught more by a frown, than others by a heavy rod on their backs.

3. Read the sin in the punishment, and justify God in what he is doing, or has done against you. So did good Eli. "And he said, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." So did Hezekiah. "He said to Isaiah, good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken: he said moreover, for there shall be peace and truth in my days." The humbled soul will do this, when the proud unhumbled spirit will strive against a reproving God, and so bring on a heavier stroke.

4. Flee with your guilt to the Redeemer's blood. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin, and for uncleanness." When God discovers your spiritual uncleanness, and we find the load of guilt on our souls: we must go to God, confess our sin freely and fully, and make application to the blood of sprinkling. Then shall our souls be cleansed from sin, by the precious *blood of his Son.* The

sting shall be taken out of the conscience, for this *blood purgeth the conscience from dead works.* And there shall be a raising up both in confidence in the Lord, and if God see it meet the stroke shall depart, however the quarrel shall be ended.

Lastly, Forsake that sin. Give up with it and strive against it. Turn to the hand that smiteth and be not like those of whom it is said, "Thou Lord hast striken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return." Return not with the dog to the vomit, otherwise you will get a sharper rebuke next.

Question. What should one do, who is afraid in a humble manner that their sin find them out? That is, that the Lord's anger justly fall upon them for their sin. "My soul, says David, trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments."

1. Go to the Lord Jesus, the great burden bearer, and lay all your guilt over upon him. Lay the hand of faith on the head of the sacrifice, and plead the promise of forgiving and forgetting. For saith the Lord, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

2. Lay yourselves down at the Lord's feet, acknowledging that you deserve wrath, but begging for his Son's sake, he would turn it away; withal resolved to submit to whatsoever chastisement he will lay on you, saying, "Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

Lastly, Mourn over your sin and walk humbly and softly under the sense of it. Faith in Christ's blood and true repentance is the best grave-stone for guilt, that it neither rise on a soul here nor hereafter. Amen.

Ettrick, August 2, 1719.—*Forenoon.*

THE GREAT DANGER OF PROFESSORS WHO HOLD THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

SERMON XVIII.

ROMANS i. 18.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

IT is highly necessary to move men to depart from iniquity, that they understand how heinously the Lord takes their going on in it,

and to what hazard they expose themselves by it. Right impressions of this would oblige men to stand and consider what they are doing towards their own ruin, while they resist known truth, and go on in opposition to it, in favour of their lusts, which in effect is the blowing up of the Lord's wrath against themselves. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven," &c.

Attend 1st. To the connection, *For*, This is the general argument to prove justification to be by the righteousness of faith revealed in the gospel. Namely, that all who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and so are ungodly and unrighteous, (and such are the heathens, ver. 19.—32 and such are the Jews and carnal professors of the gospel, chap. ii.) are condemned by the law, and therefore cannot be justified by it; but if they be justified at all, it must be by faith. "For the wrath of God," &c.

2. Attend to the words themselves, in which consider two things,

1. A revelation of wrath made. *The wrath of God is revealed.* This is opposed to the revelation of righteousness, ver. 17. and shews the absolute necessity thereof, and none will value the latter, but they who see and are convinced of the former. Now here consider, what is revealed, *The wrath of God.* This is no passion in him, who is without parts and passions, but a firm and constant will in God severely to punish men for their sins, as men filled with wrath avenge themselves on those that provoke them. *The revelation itself.* This imports the existence of wrath in the heart of God against sinners, and also the unvailing and discovering of it to them. They cannot say it is hid and unknown to them. No, it is plainly revealed to them all. To those without the church, in the natural law, or dictates of their own conscience, ver. 32. To those in the church, not only in their consciences by the natural knowledge thereof; but also in the written law. To both, by strokes of wrath inflicted for sin. This wrath is revealed *from heaven.* Either from the God of heaven; or rather from heaven as the throne of God, where he sits judging men on the earth and from which the sentence comes.

2. The objects of the wrath revealed. These are twofold. First, the personal objects, *those who hold the truth in unrighteousness.* This is the character of the objects of wrath. They are men who maltreat the truth which the Lord has lodged with them. In men's understandings the Lord has lodged truth, whether of the natural or revealed law, there to command in chief, in their hearts and lives. But they, instead of allowing it to rule them, raise up their lusts against it, and unrighteously and wickedly hold it in and hold it under. The word signifies, to obstruct, or hinder, 2 Thess. ii. 6. *Ye*

know what withholdeth. So they hinder the effect of truth in their hearts and lives, it can do nothing for their reformation. And it signifies to hold forcibly, 1 Thess. v. 21. *Hold fast that which is good.* They imprison or hold the truth prisoner, in their heads, that they may do as they please in their hearts and lives. For it is thought to be a metaphor from tyrants who oppress the innocent, keeping them prisoners against all right.

Secondly, The real objects of this wrath, the things which provoke him against the persons, *all ungodliness and unrighteousness.* The former comprehends all sins against the first table, of which keeping truth prisoner is none of the least. The latter comprehends all sins against the second table. These are the effects of men's holding truth prisoner; for during this confinement, they range up and down at liberty. And against these, and all these, how little soever men judge of them, God's wrath is revealed.

Doctrine 1.—Men's unjust holding truth prisoner makes them objects of God's wrath. I shall consider,

I. What is that truth which men hold prisoner.

II. Show how men hold truth prisoner.

III. Show that truth is unjustly thus treated. And

IV. Confirm the doctrine. We are to inquire,

I. What is that truth which men hold prisoner?

It is religious and practical truth which tends to the right ruling of the heart and life in obedience to the will of God. And all religious truth is practical, even from the lowest to the most sublime truths of religion. *For the truth is after godliness.* From the truth of God's word, we ought to learn how to carry ourselves towards God and our neighbour.

This truth is twofold. First, The truth of natural religion, or the dictates of a natural conscience, agreeable to those common notices of good and evil, left in man since the fall. "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing them witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." When God made man, he impressed on his mind, the knowledge of the whole of his duty. This was greatly defaced by the fall, yet not quite obliterated, but that there are such remains of it as the going against them renders men inexcusable. "For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." The truths thus known are such as, God is to be worshipped, men must live honestly, every one is to have his due from us. The which and the like may be and have been improved into a considerable system of morality.

Second, The truth of revealed religion, which is held out to us in the written word, and comprehends the whole truths of the law and of the gospel also. The end of which is sanctification. *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.* These truths are revealed in the church, being read and preached to them among whom God has set up his tabernacle. And they shine as light in a dark place, to guide men's feet in the way of duty. The particular truths of each of these kinds are many. But all of them are held prisoners by the ungodly and the wicked who will not bow to them in their practice, nor be guided by them. We proceed,

II. To show how men hold truth prisoner. Two ways.

I. Men hold truth prisoner in others, and so expose themselves to God's wrath. This specially three ways.

1. By putting truth into an ill name, casting reproach and disgrace upon it, on whatever pretences. *Thus many of them said of Jesus*, who is himself the truth, *He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?* This does effectually lay bands on the truth in an evil world. "Brethren, says Paul, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith." Much guilt lies upon a professing generation among us for hard speeches, which have imprisoned preached truth many a time, and marred its efficacy both on themselves and others; while they have little considered of what dreadful consequence to poor souls, the liberty which they have taken to themselves that way, has proved.

2. By resisting and opposing the truth. "Thus when the Jews opposed themselves and blasphemed, Paul shook his raiment and said unto them, your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles." When men give loose reins to their lusts to oppose the truth told them publicly or privately, they lay bands on it, and hinder its efficacy, saying, it shall not reign over us. Thus men are often irritated by the truth, instead of being humbled and bettered by it. "Am I therefore, says Paul to the Galatians, become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" Men will have truth suited to their humours, instead of suiting themselves to the truth. "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord. Which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."

Lastly, By an authoritative shutting up of truth. This often follows as a judgment. "But thou, O son of man, said God to Ezekiel, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shalt bind thee

with them, and thou shalt not go out among them. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are a rebellious house." And thus sometimes lights in the Lord's house are taken down from off the candlestick and put under a bushel, to the marring of the progress of truth, the darkening of the house, and hastening on of more wrath.

2. Men hold truth prisoner in themselves. This is what the text mainly aims at. The office of truth is to combat sin, to advance holiness, to bring the world and the soul in which it lodgeth, to a conformity to itself, to cast them into its own mould. "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." And it is held prisoner, when this effect of it is prevented by us, and we will not allow it to exert its efficacy. This is done two ways.

1. With respect to others, when it is kept back from preventing sin in them. This is done two ways. First, when it is restrained by undue silence. If the Lord call men to bring it forth, silence in that case is undue, and a bond laid on truth. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." And from this ariseth sin's going on without controul in the world.

Question, When is truth held prisoner by undue silence?

Answer, I. Negatively, not when one has no sufficient call to bring it forth. The wise man observes, *There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.* And in discerning these times there is much spiritual wisdom. *A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.* Truth kept in silence, during the proper time of silence, is not kept prisoner, but entertained in its lodging suitable to its character. "A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."

Truth is too sacred a thing, to bring forth just to make a show of, and far more to prostitute to men's lusts and humours. There is an unseasonable venting of truth, by which truth and holiness gain nothing, but lose much; as is clear in the case of Doeg discovering David, 1 Sam. xxii. 10. Our Lord forbids it. "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." The apostle says he had declared all the counsel of God, Acts xx. 27. But behold how it is qualified, ver. 20. "And how I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you,

and have taught you publicly and from house to house." Compare 1 Thess. v. 1. where he says, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is truth itself, see his practice in this matter. "But these things have I told you, that, when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I told not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

2. Positively, when the honour of God, and the good of our neighbour requires the bringing it forth. To hold truth back, when the Lord's honour requires it to come forth, is to hold it prisoner, Mark viii. 38. already cited. When the Lord's honour is at stake, truth is like a fire that will seek a vent, and get it in a tender soul. Thus speaks Jeremiah, "Then I said, I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name; but his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." And it exposes men to the wrath of God, to hold in truth in that case, for that is to sacrifice God's glory to men's own interests and lusts which is a dangerous business.

Again, to hold it in when the good of our neighbour requires it to come forth, is to hold it prisoner, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Where there is any probable appearance of sin's being prevented in others, by means of the coming forth of truth, it is not to be held in, nor can it be so, without the guilt of imprisoning it. For how can one be guiltless, when he sees his neighbour pulling down the house about his ears, and yet will not warn him, putting his soul in hazard of the Lord's anger, going out of God's way, and yet does not tell him of it.

3. When by words or actions, one holding in the truth, leads another into sin. This is to hold truth prisoner with a witness, shutting the prison door with double bars. This Paul teaches, "Who knowing, says he, the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." They knew things to be sinful, yet both did them themselves and helped forward others in them. There was a tincture of this in Peter's dissimulation, for which Paul reproved him, Gal. ii. 11,—14. This cannot miss to kindle the Lord's anger against a person, to lead others into that which he himself knows to be sinful.

II. With respect to themselves, they hold truth prisoner in themselves several ways. As by,

1. Neglecting, overlooking, and not adverting to it in the management of their hearts and lives. The Gibeonites who came to Joshua, *took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.* There is a certain carelessness men are guilty of this way, by which, though the principles of holy walking are known to them, yet they take no heed to them, but walk at random at all adventures. The light shines about them, but they take no notice of it to order their steps by it. This is to put the Lord's candle in them, under a bushel. It is a principle of religion and right reason, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do you also unto them.* But in the affairs of many this is as little regarded, as if they were incapable of reflection.

2. Not obeying truth speaking to them in their consciences. There is a conscience within men instructed in the truths of natural religion, and in Christians instructed in the truths of revealed religion, stirring up to duty to God, and one's neighbour accordingly. The which when men do not regard to obey it, in the dictates thereof, and to comply with the duties it presseth as the will of God, they hold truth prisoner, that it serves for nothing to them, but to be a witness against them, and to secure God's wrath upon them. "And thinkest thou this, O man that judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

3. Going on in opposition to known truth, knowing the right and doing the wrong. "They are of those that rebel against the light." This is a forcible holding of truth prisoner, refusing to admit its government in the soul, but on the contrary treading it under foot, to the kindling of the Lord's wrath against them who do so. How many such are there, who condemn these things in the general and in others, which yet they do themselves. Their heads are full of light, but their hearts and lives are full of darkness. They talk like saints, but live as the profane.

Lastly, by overcoming the truth in their war against it. "Who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Many a battle there is betwixt truth in the conscience, and a man's lusts, till the man taking part with his lusts against the truth, convictions are murdered, the troublesome light in the soul is put out, and truth is taken and held prisoner; that it can no more disturb the man in the enjoyment of his lusts. But he can go on securely in his sins, though the light remain, the heat of it being gone. We proceed,

III. To show that truth is unjustly thus treated, wrongously held prisoner by sinners. This is clear, for that,

1. It is God's messenger to men and his deputy in the soul, over which they have no power and authority. "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." God's truths are eternal and unchangeable like himself, and are set up in his word and the consciences of men, to rule their hearts and lives, and not to be overruled by them. So that one cannot hold it prisoner but in unrighteousness, or wrongously and in rebellion against the God of truth.

2. It is never guilty of any crime against men, that it should be so treated. Falsehood and lies are ever contrary to men's true interest, but the truth is never so. It is God's lamp set up to light them in the way to true happiness, and to keep them from the paths of ruin. And if sinners will allow it full sway in them and over them, they could not fail of being made for ever happy by it, as the disregarding of it will without question ruin them for evermore.

3. It cannot be held prisoner but for an unrighteous cause, and in favour of some lust or other. The very thing that makes a person treat it so, is that he may go on in his sin without controul. The office of truth is to be a reformer in the heart and life, and those who hate to be reformed, for that very cause rise up against it and lay bonds on it. "Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee."

Lastly, A just God will clear it, and set it free at the cost of those who hold it prisoner. "They shall know, saith the Lord, whose word shall stand, mine or theirs." If truth prevail not to men's reformation, it will prevail to their destruction; if its commands and instructions have not their effect on them, its threatenings will. "Your fathers where are they? And the prophets do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? And they returned, and said, like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." Wherefore strong is truth and will prevail, whoever oppose it. This brings us,

IV. To confirm the doctrine. Consider,

1. A person's treating truth thus is rebellion against God, who is the God of truth and Lord of light. The gospel is the sceptre of Christ's kingdom. The rod of his power, Psal. cx. 2. Those who resist it, and in opposition to it go on in their sinful courses, are declared enemies and rebels to the Lord. "But these mine enemies, says he, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." They will be broken with his iron rod. Conscience is God's deputy in the soul; therefore to go against it is to go against God, and God will ratify the sentence

pronounced by conscience, out of his word against the sinner, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

2. It exposes men to severe temporal judgments. It was our first parents holding truth prisoner, which brought in the flood of miseries on the world. To the old world Noah preached righteousness, yea, Christ by his Spirit in him preached to them, but they would not obey the truth, so they were swept away with the deluge, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

3. It exposes to spiritual judgments. Judgments of wrath on the soul. Men who will not see, God is provoked judicially to blind, to harden those who will not be softened; and to give them over to Satan and their lusts, who will not be reformed, nor withheld from them, Isa. vi. 8.—10. Thus the very means of grace become a savour of death unto many. Who can without horror read the fearful dispensation of providence against the heathens for imprisoning their light? Rom. i. 21.—28.

4. It exposes to eternal judgments. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." This crime then will bring men to everlasting ruin. The imprisoning of the truth in unrighteousness, will make them truth's prisoners in hell for ever. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Truth in God's word and in men's consciences says, *Those who do this, are worthy of death.* Their lusts bid them venture on them notwithstanding, hoping better things. But truth will prevail, because it is God's truth and cannot be broken.

Lastly, It vehemently hightens wrath and aggravates the judgments of it here and hereafter. "And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." The more light men sin against, the greater is their sin, and the more fearful will their punishment be. It will be a hot hell that these will have, who have been faithfully warned by a gospel ministry, in comparison of theirs who either never heard the gospel, or whose light has been but dim and obscure. O consider that heavy word, Deut. xxix. 19.—21.

Use 1.—This generation in this land is a generation of wrath, and cannot escape judgment come from what quarter it will. For this is the sin, the course of the generation, light is come, but they love darkness. We have had a long and clear dispensation of the gospel for many years. But look abroad in the land, and behold the fruits. They are fruits of Sodom. Few or none grow better. Many are waxing worse. Ungodliness and unrighteousness abound: not for want of light, but through resisting it. So that our sun of the gospel, is a winter sun whose efficacy is much gone. A gospel that is not obeyed but neglected and contemned; and if persecution be added to fill up the measure of iniquity and make the cup run over, it is but the native consequence of holding the truth in unrighteousness.

2. Let me apply this to you, to whom I have spoken the word of the Lord. To the best of my knowledge I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you. And I even own that your knowledge of the truth of religion, is as much generally as I ever observed in other places. But alas! I think truth is held prisoner with a witness, and our lives are not at all answerable to our light, and I fear it will bring wrath upon the place. Therefore I would have you convinced of this sin and of the hazard of it; and to forsake it and set truth free, that it may reign freely in your hearts and lives. Now,

To convince you of the truth of this charge consider,

1. Are there not some who to maintain their peace, keep off from serious consideration of that weighty point, how matters stand with them before the Lord. They do not obey the command, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. But the slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." They know if they should enter into the opening up of their state and case, their peace is gone. Their heart dies in them like a stone at the thoughts of it, and therefore they carefully hold from it. This is an evidence they are self-condemned and have no peace, but as truth is held prisoner.

2. Where is conscientious reformation, according to the word preached and acknowledged in the time for true and right? "They come unto thee, said God to Ezekiel, as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." When you go to your looking-glasses what spots are on your faces you wipe off, what is wrong in your dresses you put right. The preaching of the word is the Lord's looking-glass, set up before you every Sabbath.

See you no spots by it? Does it not discover your duties omitted, your sin committed, and often touch on the sore heel? "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." But do you labour to wipe off the spots discovered, and rectify the wrongs about you? Or do ye not even carry them away with you, and bring them back again and get the other view and carry them away again? James i. 23.—25. Ah! sirs, this is imprisoning the truth.

3. How many in the conduct of their lives and affairs consult their worldly interest and satisfy their unruly passions, but regard not the truth of God's law and gospel. Like a company of servants, that will have their own way, without any regard to their master's orders though he be looking on. They are so far from being in the fear of the Lord all the day long, that from their morning prayers, to their evening prayers, they have no more use for the fear of God, than the ape for his collar, which he puts off and on as his convenience serves, nor more use for their Bible and what it says, than if they were things out of date.

In their thoughts, words, and actions, towards God and their neighbour, they are children of Belial, without a yoke. They think, say, and do, what they please.

4. How many are there whose lives are stained with gross transgressions against the letter of the law, and never reform? Are there any amongst us who do not know that cursing, swearing, lying, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, unrighteous dealing, wrath, strife and the like, are works of the flesh, and they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God? I think there are none, though it were the advantage of some they had never known it, their sin had been the less. If men did not imprison truth, could their tongues be set against the heavens at the rate they are? Would they dare to do an unjust thing, bite and devour one another, fight and scold as void of God's fear?

5. Are not many things done, conscience in the very time reclaiming and witnessing against them; yet it is overruled and the sin done in opposition to it, Rom. ii. 15. Is it possible men and women can be hearers of the gospel and do such things as many do, without a witness against them in their own bosom, however fair a face they put on it? No, but they lay hands on it. They will tread over it, and strangle it, to please the lusts of others, or their own, and sell their souls to the devil for dishonest gain, and will do any thing to save their credit.

6. How many have had rousing awakenings, with whom all is got hushed again, and they have all the ease in their sinful courses which they had before. "Their goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away." The word has sometimes made a disturbance in some persons' consciences and they have gone away with God's arrows sticking in them, but they have got them out through time. "When Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a covenient season, I will call for thee." They have met signal judgments from the Lord's hand that have spoken plain language, they have been in imminent danger of death and eternity; and these have made them bethink themselves of turning over a new leaf, and to be other sort of persons than ever they had been. But all has turned to nothing. "Lord in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening hand was upon them."

Lastly, Are there not some who will not witness against sin in others, when they have a fair call to it; or cannot bear it witnessed against themselves? Many who can speak well in their own cause, have not a word to speak in the cause of God and holiness, but imprison truth in themselves, to their partaking of the sins of others, but say what is that to us? And many are such sons of Belial, that one cannot speak to them of their offences, but their passions rise, and they pour contempt on the reprover, instead of taking with the reproof.

Having showed you the truth of the charge, let us try to convince you of the hazard of thus imprisoning the truth. Consider,

1. That it is ingratitude to God of the deepest dye. May not the Lord say, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?" God's laying to our hands the conveniencies of this life, giving us fruitful seasons and filling us with food and gladness, obliges us to grateful improvement. Much more doth his giving us the knowledge of the truth in his gospel oblige us to it. It is a very signal and eminent benefit, and so great must be the ingratitude in so treating it. Consider that it is a spiritual mercy, a benefit for our souls. It is God's candle set up in and amongst us, to let us see to work out our salvation. Shall we then take it and put it under a bushel? We must go through a dark and dangerous world; it is a lamp to our feet, shall we cover it up. Besides it is a mercy not common to all. "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments they have

not known them. Praise ye the Lord." It is true all have some natural truth, but as for gospel truth revealed unto us, many nations in the world are without it. Look through the heathen world, and behold how they sit in the region and shadow of death, knowing nothing of a Bible, Sabbaths, ministers, sermons; and look again into this country and see how we have all these in plenty. And then think what monstrous ingratitude it is to treat truth at this rate.

It is direct disobedience to God, a flying in the face of his orders. "Now unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, God will render indignation and wrath." By this practice men will have their own will their law, and when the laws of heaven are proclaimed to them, they will not admit them, nor subject themselves to them. So that such in a peculiar manner are children of disobedience, not through ignorance, but wilfulness. Moreover,

3. It is a rising up against God in open rebellion and war. "They are of those that rebel against the light." It is as if men should not only disregard, but tear in pieces the proclamation of God's law, fall upon his heralds, and put them in bonds. If such could banish the truth from among them, that they should know it no more, they would; but since they cannot do that, they shut it up and are at war with it.

4. It is working against our own interest in favour of Satan and our lusts. It is the putting out of the candle, which God in compassion to our darkness has lighted unto us. It is like one travelling through a wilderness of pits, rising up against his guide, binding him and casting him into one of them. Like captives conspiring against their deliverers, or sick men against their physician, to their own ruin.

This is the evil of it. Now the hazard is great.

1. Men so doing grow worse and worse. "Being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness." It is a wonder to many to see men the longer they live under the means of grace, to grow worse instead of better; the name of the devil in them to turn legion, as it is with many this day. But here lies the matter, they are hellish conquerors, who grow insolent upon their victory. Like rebels waging war with their lawful prince, there is no abiding them, when the day is their own. Having got the victory over truth, they break all its bands, and cast its cords from them, the wall is thrown down, and wickedness, like a flood, breaks out and overflows all its banks.

2. It brings on judicial blindness. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the

glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Men who loving darkness rather than light, shut their eyes against the light, are in a fair way to be struck blind. So that as darkness is their choice so they shall have enough of it, Isa. vi. 9, 10. Sometimes a light is broke up in one's breast, and he is awakened. But striving against it, it is lessened and grows feebler and feebler, like the evening light, until it go quite out.

3. It brings on judicial hardness, Isa. vi. 10. A customary going on in opposition to light, is the high way to make one senseless and unfeeling, that one can sin without remorse. It makes the conscience as it were seared with a hot iron, benumbed, stupid, and dead. Every sin against light, wounds the conscience, the wounds multiplied, conscience is as it were slain outright. Hence it is, that some sins which one could not commit without great uneasiness, they have come by custom, to commit with all the ease they can wish.

4. It provokes God to give up with men and to give them over to their own lusts. "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels." This is a fearful judgment, when God withdraws the workings of his Spirit from men, which they have quenched; takes off the restraints of his providence from them, which they have striven against; lays the reins on their own necks, and suffers them to go wherever Satan and their own lusts drive them. Yet this is the native fruit of holding the truth in unrighteousness. *Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.*

5. It paves the way to the unpardonable sin, *the great transgression.* The imprisoning of truth is a main ingredient in this sin, a going over the belly of known truth. It is a total apostacy of those once enlightened, Heb. vi. 1,—8. And O what a fearful thing is it to come so near the borders of that hopeless case.

6. It is often punished with the prevailing of the spirit of error and delusion, Isa. lxvi. 3, 4. When the sacred truths of God are not entertained in the love of them, a fearful mist of error and delusion oftentimes arises to the ruin of the souls of many. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." This never since the revolution, looked so like to be the plague of this generation as now and within these few years. And by this we know what to blame for it. The primitive apostolic church had a great gospel day, but many held the truth in unrighteousness. And for the pu-

nishment of it some arose denying justification by faith, and some the resurrection and the like. After the church had had a long declining day, the great apostacy of antichrist followed in the west, 2 Thess. ii. 6,—12. And nearly about the same time, mahometanism in the east. When Luther arose, and he and others had brought back the truth from its Babylonish captivity, the anabaptists arose in Germany, with fearful and outrageous delusions. In the last age, after these nations had lost the purity of ordinances and sense of religion under prelacy, and they were recovered by the good hand of God: This nation renewing the national covenant, and the three nations entering into the solemn league and covenant, they had a bright day of the gospel a while. But not being improved, an unparalleled deluge of errors and heresies came in on the back of it, as if the gates of the bottomless pit had been set wide open, especially in England. And we have had a great and long day of the gospel since the revolution, but fearfully misimproved. And the mist is now begun to rise. Not to speak of the prevailing of deism amongst many of the nobility and gentry, some of our own profession in the neighbour nation, teachers by office, have gone about to subvert the very foundation of Christianity. And in this church controversies about the doctrine have not long since broke out, and at this present time are in being, which trysting with the divisions and the separate practices among ministers have a fearful aspect and threaten a spreading cloud of ignorance and darkness. Believe ye and receive the truth in love and give it free course with you, lest the time come when many shall say, They know not what to believe in more weighty matters, than they have yet been staggered about it.

7. It provokes God to remove the gospel from among a people, and to leave them in darkness. "Therefore, said Jesus, I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof." When people have no use for God's candle, but to divert themselves at it on Sabbath days, when they have no other thing to do, the candlestick is in a fair way to be removed out of its place, Rev. ii. 5. Many of God's candles have been put out, because their burning and shining was for no purpose to advance holiness amongst those among whom they shined. Many have put them under their bushel, so that in vain they have given light, and therefore God threatens to put them under his bushel next.

A while's darkness may make the light more prized and procure a more free course to the truth, 1 Sam. iii. 1,—8. It brings fearful tossings and rackings of conscience, when once conscience is awakened, under these Judas went and hanged himself. However

one may for a while bear down truth in a silent conscience, it is apt to rise up on them some time or other. And as a fire long smothered makes terrible havock when once it prevails and bursts out, so conscience when awakened. Then tormenting remorse takes its course in the soul and gives foretastes of hell, where the worm never dies and the fire is not quenched.

Lastly, It will aggravate a person's torment in hell, *But I say, unto you*, said Jesus to the Jews, *It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.* Remember the doom of the servant who knew his master's will, but did it not. As the sharpest vinegar comes of the most generous wine, so the most fierce wrath comes from the despising of truth revealed to one in the gospel. And when these, who were all their days kept ignorant of gospel truths shall be laid under wrath, what will the case be of those who have known them and imprisoned them? Double vengeance, even the Mediator's vengeance will be found their due, who have sinned against the remedy of sin.

3d *Use.* Set truth free, loose its bands that it may reign freely in your hearts and lives. That is,

1. Resist not truth laid before you in or from the word, or by your own conscience. Never quarrel nor contend with it, nor oppose it more. Resist not its entry, but allow it free access into your consciences. Wilful and affected ignorance in points of faith and practice, is a resisting of truth, says the Psalmist, "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness." It is the character of the wicked, *They say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* It is an evidence of enmity against the truth, when one desires not to know it, for that is only that they may enjoy some one lust or other with the more ease. But an upright heart opens to the truth, that it may be guided by it. Again, resist it not when it has entered. Rebel not against the light. Never resist the voice of your own consciences, by going contrary to its light, whatever be the temptation or the hazard. The testimony of one's conscience will be more comfortable under any trial, than all the world can be. "For our rejoicing is this, says Paul, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." And an accusing and condemning conscience will be more heavy than any other burden.

2. Slight not nor overlook truth in the conduct of your lives. Let God's word be your rule in all your actions. Take the direction of conscience from the word along with you. And let not truth

known unto you stand by unnoticed, but consult it and manage your life by it, in the several steps thereof.

3. Submit to the truth, to the truth in the word and to truth in your conscience, as the ruler of your life. It is God's deputy in your souls; it is the law of the great King, to which you are to yield in all points. Let it have the command in your souls, that they omit not what it requires, nor commit what it forbids. Let your souls be open to it, to be reformed, reproved, instructed and directed by it. Renounce your own wills, your own lusts, resolving to be guided by the testimonies of God, as to what is to be believed or practised.

Motive 1. It will set you at liberty. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Truth set free will break the bonds of sin and Satan, under which the soul is, and give the man true liberty. "I will walk at liberty, says David, for I seek thy precepts." Licentiousness, to run freely wherever a person's lusts drive him, is no true liberty. But to walk according to the rules of religion and reason is liberty indeed.

2. The way of truth is the way of holiness and happiness. Truth and godliness are akin to each other. Hence Paul speaks "of acknowledging the truth which is after godliness." Truth is the great mean of sanctification. "Sanctify them, says Jesus, through thy truth, thy word is truth." And error and darkness always foster the corruptions of the heart. Holiness leads the way to happiness. And so truth believed and practised will spring up in eternal happiness.

Lastly, Consider the imprisoning of the truth is the occasion of all ungodliness and unrighteousness among the hearers of the gospel. See the text. What is the cause of the abounding impiety and profaneness of our day, but that truth hath not its effect. When truth is pent up, the sluice of ungodlinessa nd unrighteousness is opened overturning all duty to God and to our neighbour.

Doctrine II. Truth being kept prisoner, ungodliness and unrighteousness get loose. These are like the scales in the balance, as the one goes up, the other goes down. Here we shall consider,

I. In what cases this holds true. And II. Why it is so.

I. In what cases this holds true. This holds,

1. In the case of societies, churches, nations, congregations, families, and neighbourhoods. If truth prevail among them; ungodliness and unrighteousness lose their ground. If it be not so; they prevail. Look without the visible church, it is so. "Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

Look within the church and you will find it is so, says Isaiah, "In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." If one would open the sluices of impiety that wickedness may overflow all its banks, he has no more to do, but to lay bands on the truth, and the flood will run out amain.

2. It is so in the case of particular persons. "Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst; but thou saidst there is no hope: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." When once the bands which should be laid on their lusts, are laid on the truth, then men live at large and unconfined, abandoned to a lawless liberty. And then a man becomes a son of Belial indeed, without a yoke, in effect he bids defiance to heaven. "With our tongue, say they, we will prevail, our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?" And such persons regard not men, farther than their interest and humour lead them. "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly." Now let us,

II. Show why it is so. Consider,

1. That truth and they are contrary the one to the other, so that as the one goes away, the other takes place, as light and darkness which can have no communion. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" The truth set up in one's conscience and what is revealed in the gospel teaches, "To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." And when the light of the truth is stopped, then darkness comes on, and ungodliness and unrighteousness creep out like wild beasts from their dens in the night.

2. Man's heart has a natural bias to ungodliness and unrighteousness. Truth is a curb to this bias of the heart, and when this curb is removed, the heart goes in the ungodly and unrighteous way to which it is naturally inclined. "My people, says God, are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him." Man since he first broke over the hedge of the law, cannot be kept within it, but by restraining or sanctifying grace. In both these truth is the great instrument, being that which is accommodated to the restraining of rational creatures. It is the bridle by which men, like horses and mules, must be kept in. Take it off, and men "Are as the wild ass used to the

wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, in her occasion who can turn her away?"

3. Satan strives against the truth, and to advance ungodliness and unrighteousness. For truth is a stop to the advancement of his kingdom, whereas ungodliness and unrighteousness are the very pillars of it. So getting the stop removed, he urges men with ease to ungodly and unrighteous lives. "Ye are, said our Lord to the Jews, of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." When he first brought in the flood of ungodliness on the world, he first attacked the truth; "Ye shall not, said he, surely die;" and when once he had gained that point, he carried all before him. The woman did eat, and gave also to her husband and he did eat with her. So to this day unbelief is the ruin of the world.

4. Men do not lay hands on the truth or resist it, but that they may get loose reins to their lusts. "Let us, say they, break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." They can have no quarrel with it, but that which the owl has with the sun, that it gives light, and they love darkness and the works of darkness, therefore they hate the light. Were the hearts of men reconciled to their duty, and devorced from their lusts, they would as willingly hearken to the truth, as a man that wishes to keep his way would listen to a director, who would conduct him safely past every danger.

Use 1st, See what is the spring and cause of all the ungodliness, and unrighteousness, and wickedness, which abound in the land, and in the congregation this day. It is the imprisoning of truth, men going in direct opposition to the word of God, and their own consciences. The contempt of the gospel, and not obeying it, leaves the sluice of profanity open, fills churches, nations, and congregations with scandalous practices. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

2. Whoever they are, who have any hand in rendering the gospel unsuccessful, are so far chargeable with the ungodliness and unrighteousness that follow thereupon. And this will conclude all guilty of the wickedness of the generation, for, alas! on all hands, and among all parties, the success of the gospel is little regarded. Many stumbling-blocks are laid by the preachers of it, long have many people striven to make them contemptible; the weighty concern of the gospel, doing good to souls has been sacrificed to party zeal, humour and interest. So that it is like to be a fearful reckoning, God will have with pastors and people, with all the different

parties among us, when God rises to visit for the unkind treatment, the gospel has received from all hands, as to the success of it.

3. If there were no more evil in bearing down the truth and marring its efficacy, instead of promoting it in our several stations, it is bad policy. How many complaints are there in families, that masters, servants, husbands, wives, are most undutiful to their relatives, which occasions much uncomfortable living in families. How many complaints among neighbours, that people cannot trust one another, that so many stand not to wrong their neighbours, take the bread out of their mouths, bite and devour one another? What is the fountain of all this disorder? Alas it is a thing that is but little laid to heart. The truth has not its effect among us, and none, or next to none are concerned to promote it. Alas! Sirs, do you expect that they will regard man, who will have no regard to God? Do you expect that righteousness and dutifulness will be brought into your families and neighbourhoods, where there are no pains taken to bring people to obey the truth and fear the Lord?

4. The way to obtain reformation much needed, is that every one in their several capacities, strive that the truth may have free course, the gospel may have its effect. Let no man think that this belongs to ministers only; no, but as when a house is on fire, every man is to help, so here. It is common duty and interest too. Beware of speaking or doing any thing by which the success of the gospel may be marred, lest souls perish thereby and their blood be charged on those who lay the stumbling-block before them. Do every thing in your power for the furtherance of the gospel. Were this point more considered, men would be very sure that God's command in his word, made separation a duty before they dared to venture upon it; because otherwise all the ruining consequences of it to many poor souls, thereby taught to despise ministers and ordinances by them administered, lie at their door who make the separation not made a necessary duty by God's own command in his word. I have with a bleeding heart often seen and felt the consequences of such separation, and have always been of the mind that our divisions here, are one of the great causes of the little success of the gospel among us; marring the effect both of doctrine and discipline upon poor souls. And therefore no marvel one have a horror of it, till God's own word bind it on their conscience. Professors may very well plead with their mother to put away her whoredom; and if she deny them the privileges of the family, unless they will play the whore also, or drive them out of her house, they may justly leave her. But while she does neither of these, but only requires them to join with her in uncontroverted duty to her

husband, and managing the lawful affairs of the family; they cannot leave her without breach of duty and without condemning the generation of the righteous, following this method in the Old and New Testament. And let one's own conscience judge, whether staying in her house and pleading with her in this manner, or leaving her for altogether, be the most proper means to reclaim her from her whorish practices?

5. See why truth in the gospel or in men's consciences once overborne and oppressed is so difficult to rise again. Ungodliness and unrighteousness break loose, and the sluice once opened is difficult to stop. The hard heart grows harder. *The last state of that man is worse than the first.* No person's case is more hopeless than that of apostates, the returning devil brings with him seven spirits worse than himself, 2 Pet. ii. 20.—22. How many have sometimes had convictions, touches from the word into the innermost parts of their souls, from whom God is gone and answers them no more. And the more they had of these, they are now the harder to work upon.

6. In what a sad case are these from whom the gospel is taken, or truths profitable for them kept up, or their consciences seared that truth cannot enter. In these cases ungodliness and unrighteousness get loose. When the gospel goes, God goes. *Yea, woe also to them,* says God, *when I depart from them.* So far as profitable truth is withheld, men's souls are starved and betrayed into snares, and the hands of their enemies. And the seared conscience must needs make a sinful life, when the eyes are put out the whole body must be full of darkness.

Lastly, As ever you would have the current of ungodliness and unrighteousness stopped, labour you that truth may have a free course.

What can we do to the stopping of the dreadful current?

1. Walk in the truth yourselves. "I rejoiced greatly, said John, that I found of thy children walking in the truth, as we have received commandment from the Father." Be ye doers of the truth. Study to know it, and what you know practise. This will not only tend to the good of your own souls, but to the good of others, to direct them in their way. "Thus you may be blameless and harmless the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life;" and if men will not be taught by such conduct it will turn to a testimony against them. Thus Noah by his righteous conduct condemned the world.

2. Support the interest of truth in others. Do every thing for the truth. Do all you can to promote the truth in others, because it is

the sovereign remedy for healing sinners. The nails driven, in the preaching of the word, do you endeavour to rivet in any, as you have access to them. Labour to remove men's prejudices against the gospel and the way of holiness. Exert yourselves to carry on convictions of sin and duty, where they appear to be begun. Let your communications be to the use of edifying, and by these means you may be instrumental in stopping the current of unrighteousness and ungodliness.

Motive 1. Consider the case of the day needs it. It is a day of abounding sin. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." It is a day in which our Saviour's prediction is accomplished. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." All ranks of men have corrupted their ways, and every one is adding to his coal to the fire of wrath. A general corruption of manners overflows, atheism, irreligion, profanity and formality, and by these God is dishonoured, our holy religion is blasphemed, and the glorious gospel is despised. It is also a day of approaching wrath. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" We have met with many deliverances. God has been saying, "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." But all this prevails not to make the generation one whit better; but we rather grow worse; and therefore God's voice may be to us, "Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward, therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee, I am weary with repenting." God has many arrows in his quiver. But which of them soever he use, there is no appearance that this generation can escape a rousing stroke.

Motive 2. It will always be well with those who take part with truth and holiness, setting themselves against the flood of sin in an ungodly and unrighteous generation. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings."

If you do prevail in any measure to stop the flood of sin, so far as you do prevail, you bring honour to God, who is dishonoured by ungodly and unrighteous practices. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." You also bring safety to perishing souls, and oh! what should not one do to save a soul from death. "Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of

sins." You also strengthen the cause of religion by making friends to it, and weaken Satan's kingdom.

But though you should not prevail, yet you give your testimony for God. "They that forsake the law praise the wicked; but such as keep the law contend with them." And you deliver your own souls from the guilt of the common conspiracy. You take the best way for safety in the evil day. "And the Lord said to him, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the forehead of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." So that you shall either be delivered from trouble or in trouble.

Doctrine III. and last. God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who have the truth, but truth has not its effect upon them.

This is not the sound of God's fearful trumpet of the law, against all who obey not the gospel by believing and repenting; and we are obliged to sound it, as well as the trumpet of the gospel. The gospel damns no man; it needs not, for if it save them not, the law will ruin them eternally, and that as law-breakers and despisers of the gospel. "Do not think, said Jesus to the Jews, that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust."

From this doctrine, I shall,

I. Consider the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, against which the wrath of God is revealed.

II. I will consider the wrath of God which is revealed against this ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

III. Show how this wrath is revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. I am,

I. To consider the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men against which the wrath of God is revealed. Under this general head, I shall, I. Condescend on some gross sins under the two branches of ungodliness, and unrighteousness. II. Point out some mother sins, and III. Mention some distinctions and kinds of sin in general, and under each of these show the wrath of God revealed against them.

I am to condescend on some gross sins under the two branches of ungodliness and unrighteousness, and show the wrath of God revealed against them.

I. Some pieces of gross ungodliness.

1. Blasphemy, denying God, or speaking reproachfully of God, or of any of the persons of the ever blessed Trinity. Such monsters this land of light has produced; for men disregarding known truth, grow worse than those to whom it is not revealed. And Satan rages

the more that the light combats his kingdom. God's wrath is revealed against this sin. In the Old Testament it was death by the law of God. "Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him; as well the stranger as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death. In the New Testament we have blasphemers delivered unto Satan for their crime. "Whom, says Paul, I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

2. Idolatry and religious imagery. Papists profane our land. And I wish I could say they only did it. But there is a piece of horrible abomination crept into this land, the rudiments of popery, from our neighbours of the rotten church of England. Images or pictures of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, some representing him, hanging on the cross, some ascending into heaven. Strings of beads wrought before in the form of a cross, lime vessels with I. H. S. in the bottom. And I doubt not there are many other of that sort, which I have never seen. But to the best of my observation, this deluge broke in upon us from that quarter in the four last years of Queen Anne's reign; without doubt to prepare the nation insensibly for the popish Pretender and popery. I would fain hope there are none of them among you? But why should I say that, for, to the best of my remembrance, it was in presbyterian houses that I observed any of them. There is likewise in some Bibles the picture of God represented by the sun and the name Jehovah in Hebrew letters in the midst of it. I warn you from God, that all pictures of God or any person of the holy Trinity is an abomination; and if you have any of these things, that you deface or destroy them; and if you see them any where that you testify your abhorrence of them, as blasphemous against God, for the information of misled people, and as you would not partake of their sin. God's wrath is revealed against this in the second commandment. See also Romans i. 23, 24.

3. Cursing and swearing profanely. Wrath is revealed against this in the third commandment. Some men curse and swear in cold blood. Others, when the devil has blown up their passions, they will open their mouth as if hell were opening. What a wonder of patience is it, that God makes not the swearer's tongue to fall on himself, let loose the devil to take them away visibly that call on him so; that he strike not the worms dead on the spot that profane his sacred name. We cannot get this reformed among you, but it abounds among us, and some have the impudence to cry out against ministers taking the oath imposed by the law upon them, under the

pain of all that they have in the world; and yet themselves will curse and swear, when no one bids them, but the same law of the land forbids them under a penalty. Some will be praying one while and cursing another. As I have often, so I now warn you that the wrath of God is revealed against profane cursing and swearing. And I here protest against all the cursers and swearers in this perish present or absent, and call the timber and stones of this house to witness, that God's wrath shall pursue them for evermore for it, if they do not repent, Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.

4. Sabbath-breaking and profane neglect of God's worship. This is a crying sin in our day, bringing wrath on the land. Application has been made to get the fairs and markets in the country altered, which occasion the Sabbath to be profaned by travelling and driving cattle to them on the Lord's day, but without success. It is profaned by many, who loiter away Sabbaths at home, as if the public exercise of God's worship was no part of Sabbath sanctification. How they are employed at home their own consciences can tell. But some there are whom nothing hinders, but a profane contempt and neglect of God's ordinances; that all the sermons which they hear from the end of the year to the other may be soon told. Some come to the church, whose behaviour at it looks neither like grace nor good manners, doing several highly improper and offensive things even in the time of worship. Wrath is revealed against these. "Did not your fathers thus, said Nehemiah, and did not our God bring all this upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

II. Some pieces of gross unrighteousness.

1. Disobedience to parents, refractoriness and rebellion against them. This is a piece of gross unrighteousness, for what human authority is more sacred than that of a parent, which some nevertheless trample on, and prove a grief of heart instead of a comfort to their parents. And this in some monsters of mankind has proceeded to cursing or beating of father or mother, and in some to the murdering of them. God's wrath is revealed against this in the fifth commandment. It is also declared, "That the eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. For every one that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him."

2. Drunkenness that lothsome sin. This puts a man on a level with the beasts, destroys the soul, murders the body, darkens the mind, breaks a person's health, and ruins their substance. A sin prevail-

ing among us beyond what we could believe; where there is fuel for the lust in so many houses, that by their number must be for luxury, not necessity. And love to, and abuse of, the fiery liquor in this place, which God nor nature never ordained for common drinking, will bring many to the place where thy will not get a drop of cold water to cool their tongue, if they repent not. God's wrath is revealed against this sin. "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

3. Uncleanness, of which we seldom want sad instances, which fill our hands with many sad processes, besides others that are easily discovered. The causes of this sin abounding so much in the place, I reckon to be your fulness of bread and the solitariness of the place, and I think I may add a certain garb peculiar to the country, which I am sure in some places would not be reckoned a modest one. But let men and women know that God's wrath is revealed against this sin. "Whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge. For this we know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

4. Dishonesty; want of common honesty in dealings with men, cheating and stealing. God has established property among men, and forbidden all manner of injustice in that command, *Thou shalt not steal*, and requires justice to reign among them. But alas how many are there, who are void of common honesty, stand not on cheating in their bargains, are unfaithful in what is committed to their trust, and can put out their hand to their neighbour's goods, if they can but carry their point without being discovered. Many have lost their credit in this way, brought themselves to disgrace and public punishment; and some from less to more have brought themselves to the gibbet. God's wrath is revealed against this. The unrighteous and thieves are excluded from the kingdom of God. What is brought in that way, if not worth twopence brings a curse with it. "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof." And moreover, you must be ready to restore if in your power; else there is no pardon. Idleness and an unmortified lust are the inlets to this sin.

Lastly, Lying, a common sin, which many commit freely. There is a certain baseness in this sin, beyond many others, so that liars themselves cannot endure to be called so. And no wonder, for the liar's credit is gone as soon as he is discovered, and there is no

trusting him when he speaks truth not otherwise known. It is a part of the old man. "Hence, says the apostle, lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." It is the natural product of the unrenewed heart. "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." But grace no sooner enters but it banishes it. "For he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour." The devil was the first liar, and it was a lie that ruined the world. God has a particular hatred of it. "A lying tongue is an abomination to him." His wrath is revealed against it. "He will destroy them that speak leasing. A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape." They are barred out of heaven by name. "For there shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that maketh a lie." Their lodging is appointed with the devil *in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, in which all liars shall have their part.* We are,

II. To point out some mother sins and the wrath revealed against them.

1. Unbelief, not believing the gospel, nor falling in with the grand device of salvation, through Jesus Christ, not closing with Christ in the gospel offer, nor making use of him for the great ends for which the Father has given him. This is lightly looked at, but is the great cause of ruin under the gospel, John iii. 19. It is the mother sin to all others. Wrath against it is revealed in the most express manner. *He that believeth not shall be damned.* And there is no escaping *for them who neglect the great salvation.* For it is sinning against the remedy, despising the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

2. Gross ignorance of the principles of religion. It also is a mother sin; one may lead the blind what way he pleases; so may Satan, an evil world, and an evil heart, lead an ignorant person. Ignorance keeps one from believing, for they know not to believe from repenting, for they know not what to repent of. It muffles them up in darkness, and will land them in eternal darkness. Wrath is revealed against it, though many look on it as a shelter from wrath. "My people, says God, are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee." Behold how Christ comes, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

3. Pride and self-conceit, another mother sin. It is the great de-

ceiver. *The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee.* It carries men into a thousand snares. It exalts them against the God that made them, and causes them break over all bounds. Who is the Lord, said Pharaoh, that I should obey him? They will not submit to word nor providences. It exalts them against men, they will not be advised nor taught; nay, they trample upon others, to raise up themselves. It hides a man from himself, blinds him to his sin and to his duty, Rev. iii. 17. So is the highway to destruction. Wrath is revealed against it. As it makes one most unlike the lowly Jesus, it makes him like the devil, and leads the way to damnation. "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." God is the proud man's enemy. "God resisteth the proud. A man's pride shall bring him low."

4. Spiritual slothfulness. This is a devouring deep, in which many good motions, convictions, and purposes are swallowed up and utterly lost. It is a waster and destroyer of the life and health of the soul. It is a disposition of heart which renders a man adverse to good, prone to evil, and lays him open to Satan's snares. To this a man owes the neglect of his duty to God and to his own soul; his soul's case going all to wreck. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands, the house droppeth through." It is from this that there comes one off-put after another to repentance and reformation till the time be gone. Wrath is revealed against it, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." Now is the seed time for eternity, to sleep now will make a bad harvest. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." See the doom of the sluggard and his sin, Matth. xxv. 26,—30.

5. Inordinate love of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is a corrupt spring which has several streams. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And the main stream is not the same in all. Some pursue the profits; others the lust of the eye; some the pleasures of it, the lust of the flesh; others the vain promp of it, the pride of life. Some roll themselves in the bosom of a fawning world; others court a frowning world, for its smiles as their chief good. In a word, the clay idol, in its several shapes, has many votaries who put it in the room of God. This is a mother evil, which turns the world upside down, and fills it with all manner of wicked-

ness, done to gratify this master lust. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." But wrath is revealed against this sin. Paul declares repeatedly, "That for these things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." See also, James v. 1.—6.

6. Slighting the means of grace, public, private, or secret. This is a mother sin too. When the wells of salvation are opened amongst a people, but they have no appetite to drink of them. Then is a price put into their hands to get wisdom, but they have no heart to it. This shews itself in the neglect of public ordinances, family and secret duties, or not improving of them. Wrath is revealed against this. Men may blind their own consciences with silly shifts and excuses, but these will not pass with God, Luke xiv. 16,—24. Yea, such conduct will aggravate their condemnation. They had the opportunity but slighted it. These slighters will themselves be the losers, and find it so in the end. "He that sinneth against me, saith Jesus, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death."

Lastly, Neglect of relative duties. These are the bands of society, which, when they are disregarded, all goes loose and into disorder. Families are the nurseries both of church and state. When the members of families do not regard, especially their spiritual duty to one another, parents to educate their children for God, to concern themselves for the welfare of the souls of their servants; and they again to be dutiful to them and watch over one another, it is the opening of a sluice of sin. Wrath is revealed against it. "Shall I not visit them for these things? Saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this." Micah vii. 4,—8. It remains,

III. To point out some distinctions and kinds of sin in general, and the wrath which is revealed against them. God's wrath is revealed against all kinds of sin, particularly,

1. Against open sins, of one's life, lip, heart, and nature. Men's life-sins, their sinful deeds and actions. Let no man think that he may live as he pleases, and do as he will; for God remembers all our deeds, and men shall be judged according to their works, and a sinful life will make a sad reckoning: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Against lip sins, the sins of the tongue. God made the tongue man's glory, but men have turned it to the dishonour of God: so that it is a world of iniquity. An unruly tongue rages against God and against man; and thinks little of words. They are but wind say some. But they are wind that will blow men to hell. "But I say unto you, said Jesus, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

This wrath is revealed also against heart sins. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." The heart is hid from men but God seeth it clearly and all that lodgeth in it, or passeth through it, and has bound men to heart holiness, as well as life holiness. And wrath is not more dreadfully revealed against any sins than heart sins. "And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall be upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."

Against the sin of man's nature, that corrupt bias of the heart which we bring into the world with us, containing in it an aversion to good and bent to evil; and a perversion of all the faculties of the soul. This was one of the causes of the deluge. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Accordingly infants as well as others were swept away with the deluge. Men think little of this, but it will ruin men for ever, if it be not healed by regenerating grace. *For except a man be born again*, said our Lord, *he cannot see the kingdom of God.* God's holy nature can so little endure our depravity, that he will pursue it with eternal wrath, as what is most contrary to his holy nature. "And there shall in no wise enter into the heavenly Jerusalem, any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.

2. God's wrath is revealed against sins of commission and omission. Against sins of commission. God's law is the hedge which he hath set about men to keep them in, and it is fenced with wrath.

revealed against those who shall venture to break over it. *Whoso breaketh this hedge, a serpent shall bite him.* The sword of justice stands on the other side to pierce those who dare to commit what God hath forbidden, for they are worthy of death, Rom. i. 32. Also against sins of omission. God's wrath is not only revealed against men's doing what he hath forbidden, but also against their not doing what he hath commanded. And so many omissions of duty, we are guilty of so many sins exposing us to wrath. It is a sad thing that men should look so lightly on omission, seeing the great damning sin is of this kind. *He that believeth not shall be damned.* And in the great day, sins of omission shall be brought forward to the condemnation of many, Matth. xxv. 41.—46. And the curse of the law runs directly against them. "For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

3. Against open and secret sins. Against open sins, whereby God is provoked and others stumbled and scandalized. "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not; woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves." Impudence in sin by which men bring forth their works of darkness before the sun, is no small aggravation of it and will also aggravate the punishment. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay they were not at all ashamed, neither they blush; therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord." And the scandal given by open sin goes deep, Matth. xviii. 7.

Against secret sins. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are spent away in thy wrath." Secret sinning is a daring or despising of the all-seeing eye, and therefore God watches to discover them to the world. "Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the congregation." Secrecy is a great temptation to sin, but the godly will be afraid of secret as well as of open sin. *Cleanse me,* says David, *from secret faults.* They know that there is nothing hid that shall not be revealed, or secret that shall not be made known, and that God will bring every secret thing into judgment. Sin is like the ointment of the right hand, it will discover itself. *And be sure your sin will find you out.*

4. God's wrath is revealed against personal sins and relative sins. Against personal sins, such as affect ourselves only in their own nature. The gospel requires personal holiness. It teaches us to live *soberly.* And wrath is revealed against, and shall be inflicted upon

all who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though one lived alone altogether by himself, his duty to God, and his own soul must be performed, otherwise he incurs God's anger.

Against relative sins, the sins of the several relations in which we stand. In whatever relation we are placed, whether in the church, state, or family, God has prescribed us our duty, wherein we are to walk in these relations; and we cannot be unfaithful or negligent in them, but we expose ourselves to the anger of God.

5. Against the sin of the particular bias of our nature, as well as these of the general bias of it. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." The sin that by reason of our natural temper, constitution, manner of life, does most easily beset us, though we are apt to indulge ourselves in it, God will not, but it will bring us to ruin, if we hold not off from that as well as from others. *I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.*

Lastly, God's wrath is revealed against all sin, great or small. The sins of every size, customary or not customary, signal miscarriages or more ordinary sinning. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." We now proceed,

II. To consider the wrath of God revealed against this ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Here we shall first show what this wrath is; and secondly, take notice of the properties of this wrath.

1. What is God's wrath? Wrath in men is the passion of anger risen to a height; but since there are no passions in God, wrath is not ascribed to God in respect of the affection, but of the will and effects. There are three things then in it.

The highest aversion to ungodliness and unrighteousness. "Thou Lord art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." They are most contrary to his holy nature, so that he cannot endure the sight of them. "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of iniquity." He has (so to speak) a natural antipathy against them, such a strong aversion to them, that it is impossible he should ever lay aside his utmost abhorrence of them, or cease to hate them and be angry at them.

It implies, secondly, A constant will to punish them as crimes against his honour. By the righteousness of his nature he has this will. "It is a righteous thing with God, says Paul, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people." So that these sins can

never be forgiven, but on a valuable satisfaction, by which the due wrath and punishment not laid upon the guilty, is yet laid fully upon the Cautioner, who stands in their stead. And where there is no cautioner, there it falls on the head of the guilty. "And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off."

It implies, thirdly, Actual resentment of them in the effects of wrath. "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies." This is called pouring out of wrath, by which the heavens, black above the heads of the ungodly and unrighteous, do disburden themselves upon them in showers. "For great, said Josiah the king, is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord." And as no man can count the drops of a shower, so the direful effects of the wrath of God, on the body and soul are innumerable. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." It is not only as showers of water, but of fire. "Who, says the prophet Nahum, Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." And there is,

The small rain of wrath, that falls on the ungodly and unrighteous on earth. "God, says Zophar, shall cast the fury of his wrath upon the wicked, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating." This is a rain that never ceases, sometimes it is greater, sometimes less; but it is never quite fair, any day that dawns to the ungodly. *For God is angry with the wicked every day.* Sometimes indeed the sun of outward prosperity shines on him, but even while it is shining, it is raining on him also. Drops of wrath are silently sinking into his soul, his body, his every enjoyment. *The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* The least stroke he meets with is a drop of wrath. But besides these drops,

There is also the great rain of his strength, that falls upon them in hell. In this life there are thunder claps of wrath from the word, in the threatenings, and the shower falls; but for the most part sinners are deaf to the thunder, and shift for themselves under the rain. But at the great day, the great thunder clap is given from the throne. "Then the Judge shall say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And then the fountains of the great deep, and the windows of heaven are opened, and the full shower comes which makes an eternal deluge; for it will rain for ever, without one clear

blink through the ages of eternity. "Upon the wicked God shall rain, snares, fire and brimstone; and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

We find this shower represented under the notion of a shower of hail, Rev. xvi. 21. *Every stone about the weight of a talent*, a prodigious size; and then it will pierce them to the soul, and fill them with despair under which they will rage and despair evermore. This is that rain which is in the cloud of the threatening against the ungodly and unrighteous, which gathered together and began to fall when Adam fell from God; and which rained down in such abundance, as made the way betwixt heaven and earth unpassable. But with respect to believers, it is over, having fallen out on Christ their surety. *With them the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.* Nevertheless with respect to men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, it continues in its full force. This is that wrath of God which is revealed against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. Let us,

2dly, Take notice of the properties of this wrath of God.

1. It is most mighty wrath. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." There is no standing before it. *Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?* It comes on like a deluge of waters, overflows and sweeps all away before it. *The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.* It burns as a fire and devours all before it as the flame doth the dry stubble. "Men perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." Worm man cannot resist it, cannot make head against it.

2. It is unsupportable. What men cannot resist, they will set themselves to bear. But wrath strikes the criminal in a most tender part, where a wound produces intolerable pain. *A wounded spirit who can bear?* Wrath is a sinking load on the soul, quite beyond the power of the creature to comport with. "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings." Therefore there is no rest under the load, Rev. xiv. 11.

3. It is most penetrating and piercing wrath, a seeking thing like water or oil. "As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garments, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones." Men's wrath may reach flesh, blood, and bones, but can go no further; there is a precious part within which it cannot reach. But God's wrath pierceth into the whole man and every part. "God is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." It sinks into the soul and conscience. "The arrows of the Almighty, says Job, are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." As with some struck

with thunder, not a wound in their skin, yet the bones are crushed, or grinded, and the life is gone; so a person's external comforts standing entire about him, his soul may be melted within him, as in Belshazzar's case.

4. It is most vehement and exquisitely tormenting. By the hand of wrath, sinners falling under it shall be torn in pieces. *Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* It is a fearful story, 2 Kings ii. 23. But the united force of lions, leopards, and bears, is little enough to represent, what tearing an angry God makes on the ungodly, Hosea xiii. 7, 8. By the millstone of wrath they will be grinded to powder, Luke xx. 18. By the fire of wrath they will be burned and scorched. *For God is a consuming fire.* No pain more exquisite than what is caused by burning, and no fire burns so keenly as the fire of God's wrath. "The pile of Tophet is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

5. It is wrath treasured up. "The wicked treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." This speaks a fulness of wrath. The clouds of wrath are full and ready to burst, to empty themselves on impenitent sinners. A variety of it. The wrath of God is a teeming womb of all miseries on the ungodly, Deut. xxxii. 23.—26. All the mischiefs that can befall a creature, are in this treasure, and all shall be gathered together and cast into the lake with the generation of his wrath. *And whosoever are not found written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire.* It speaks also the reserving of it for them. They are reserved for it as fuel for the fire. *God reserveth the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.* And it is reserved for them. "The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." And this will be brought on them in due time, *When the day of the Lord's anger cometh upon them.* Hence frequently compared to travailing pangs.

6. It is continuing wrath without intermission. The worst season has readily some intermission, some fair blinks, but God's wrath is an abiding cloud on the objects of it. *The wrath of God abideth on them.* The curse abides in the house, Zech. v. 4. Men are born children of wrath, and if they be not born again, it lies on them from the cradle to the grave. It leaves them not at death, but goes with them to the other world. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness.* And the full shower comes on at last, when they are plunged into everlasting burning.

7. It is eternal wrath. "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his

power." It will lie on the sinner through all the ages of eternity. The bands of death will be loosed, and the grave will cast out the dead criminal, and though he cry to the hills and rocks to cover him, they will not hear; because he must live to the end he may be ever dying. The wrath of mortals, death will extinguish if nothing else can; but the wrath of the eternal God is a worm that never dies, and is a fire never quenched. And God's wrath will ever be the wrath to come.

8. It is unavoidable to such as continue in their ungodly and unrighteous state and courses. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." What way is it possible for them to avoid it? They may fancy that time will wear it out, and a provoked God will forget the affronts. But in vain. "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their works." Fair words will never appease this wrath. "Without shedding of blood their is no remission of sin." They cannot outwit him who is omniscient; nor outbrave the omnipotent; nor flee from the presence of the omnipresent God.

Lastly, After all, it is most just, a clear fire without smoke. *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?* The sea of wrath raging against the sinner, remains clear as crystal. No transport of fury to carry him to excess, is consistent with his nature. The offence is against an infinite God, and must be infinitely punished. It remains,

III. To show how this wrath is revealed against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. It is revealed three ways.

1. In the word. Therein God has declared his anger against all such. And one jot or tittle cannot pass away without being fulfilled. The Bible is a standing witness against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, a solemn warning piece to all. And the preaching of the word reveals it also. The Lord's messengers are sent to warn sinners of that wrath. They are to say, "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." And the warnings which men get in this way will aggravate their condemnation. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

2. In providences. God has not left himself without a witness, in his works, as well as in his word. It is revealed to us, in the wrath which falls on others. Look into the records of providence, in all ages, the deluge, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. Observe what has fallen out in our day of this sort. It is a reve-

lation of God's wrath, against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, and the language is, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

It is revealed also in the wrath, which at any time has fallen on ourselves. When that prevails not to turn men from their ungodly, and unrighteous courses, it says, "Therefore will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Who are they in whose experience some threatenings of the word have not been accomplished, which may have made them say, "As I have done, so God hath requited me. Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." If therefore we repent not, these are pledges of the full shower of wrath.

Lastly, in men's own consciences; "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Ungodliness and unrighteousness, in those who have the truth, leaves a sting in their consciences behind it. Conscience is a domestic preacher to them, who lays before them the commands and threatenings wherewith they are fenced, and so binds them over to answer it before the tribunal of God. And as long as there is a conscience within men's breast, that witnesseth for God, that he is angry with men's ungodliness, and unrighteousness, they must needs acknowledge his wrath to be revealed against them.

Use. 1. Of information. Then,

1. God is well pleased with those who obeying the truth, live godly and righteous lives. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." God's word and their own conscience favour them, and the providence of God too, causing all things work together for their good. When they look without them into the word they find God's approbation of their way: when they look within them to their own conscience, they have its testimony in their favour; or about them in providence, they will see all for their real welfare. "Moreover by them, God's statutes, is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

2. The pleasure of ungodliness and gain of unrighteousness, are dear bought. It may be sweet in the mouth, but it will be bitter in the belly. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity." Did men consider the black cloud that hovers over their ways of ungodliness, and unrighteousness continually, they would be afraid to venture on them. For whatever ease is

found in them for the present, it exposes the soul to everlasting disquiet, and where a penny is gained, a talent is lost. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul."

Lastly, They are left without excuse who living under the gospel, obey it not, but lead still ungodly, and unrighteous lives. They cannot say they are not warned, they understand not the danger of that course: for it is revealed to them plainly, that God's wrath will overtake them in such courses. And if men will not let themselves believe it, then who can help it? If men will delude themselves, and sooth up themselves in their ungodly, and unrighteous courses fearful will be the taking off the vail and undeceiving them, Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

Use 2. Of exhortation.

As ever you would escape the wrath of God in time and eternity renounce all ungodliness and unrighteousness; and since you have the gospel, the truth, let it have its effect on you. For the wrath of God is revealed against all who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Motive 1. Consider, much less than the wrath of God falling in full measure on impenitent sinners, is very terrible, how much more that wrath. The wrath of a king is terrible. *The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.* When the wrath of Ahasuerus was kindled against Haman, his ruin was secured. Kings have power in their hand to reward or punish; so their wrath is terrible to their fellow-creatures. But what is the wrath of a king to that of the King of kings? The very threatening of God's wrath is most awful. "When I heard this, says Habakkuk, my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself." The sight of the hand writing on the wall made Belshazzar tremble. God speaking in wrath to a sinner, is enough to damp the stoutest sinner. How much more the fulfilling of it. Even God's fatherly anger against his own children is very dreadful. The Lord's rod on his own is but the rod of a man, but yet how does Job cry out under it. "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." How did it affect Asaph, Psal. lxxvii. and Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. What must it then be on his enemies. Finally, God's giving the law on mount Sinai was full of terror. See how it affected the people, Exod. xx. 18, 19. *Yea, so terrible was the sight, that Moses himself said, I exceedingly fear and quake* What will it then be when he comes to avenge the transgressions of that law?

Motive 2. Consider what a God he is whose wrath is revealed. He is most just. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity. God must act contrary to his own nature, if sin go without wrath. This makes the destruction of the impenitent pleasing to God. For though God distributes sorrows, with sorrow (so to speak) to his own people; *For in all their afflictions, he is afflicted*, yet he is eased as it were, in making his enemies the resting place of his wrath. *Ah*, says he, *I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.*

He is omniscient. Therefore an angry God knows all the affronts given, and cannot fail to devise and find out all means, by which his wrath may be executed to all possible satisfaction of his justice. He is omnipotent. There is nothing beyond the compass of his power. It must be fearful to fall into the hands of the living God. For he can hold up sinners with one hand through eternity, while the other shall lie heavy upon them. Finally, God is eternal. Men die, and their wrath with them; but he will be an everlasting enemy, and while he is, will pursue the quarrel.

Motive 3d and last. Consider the fearful instances of wrath, first of men. Many have been made monuments of the Lord's anger, in their sinful courses. Wrath has swept away multitudes together, who have fallen a sacrifice to God's anger. Wrath has fallen on men's infant relations, yea on the very place of their ungodliness, and unrighteousness. Adam sinned and wrath came upon him, and upon all his. It came upon the old world; upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Upon the rich man in hell, when he could not find a drop of water to cool his tongue.

Secondly, Upon fallen angels. They sinned and God made their case hopeless. No Mediator was provided for them. They were the first that ventured to break over the hedge, and God made them dreadful instances of his justice and severity. They believe and tremble.

Lastly, It came upon the man Christ standing in the room of the elect. *God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.* Wrath coming on him makes him sore amazed, fall on the ground and sweat great drops of blood. What is a deluge? What is the noise of a dissolving world, to God groaning and dying on a cross? Infinite wisdom and holiness did it, to make sin appear like itself.

Wherefore I warn you all and every one, to renounce ungodliness and unrighteousness and to allow truth to have its full effect; declaring that otherwise the wrath of God will pursue those who will not. Amen.

Ettrick, August 15, 1722.

[Fast before the Sacrament.]

THE EVIL OF CHRIST'S FRIENDS LIFTING UP THEIR HEEL AGAINST HIM.

SERMON XIX.

PSALM xli. 9.

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

WE are met this day, to cry for bread to our bodies, which the Lord is threatening to take from us; and to prepare ourselves for eating the bread for our souls, of which the Lord is giving us the comfortable prospect. In both cases it is fit for our humiliation, that we reflect on the use which we have formerly made of both, and we will find the text heaven's just complaint against us.

The Psalmist having complained of his enemies, that they longed for his death, contrived and spread lying stories about him, rejoiced in his affliction; doth in the text show the copestone laid on the maltreatment with which he met in the world, by his particular friends turning abusive to him, *Yea, mine own familiar friend, &c.*

1. Here is the character of the person of whom he chiefly complains. It is twofold, First he was his confident, one with whom he had a particular intimacy, and in whom he trusted. The man of *my peace*, that is, one with whom he had no variance nor dissension: in whom he confided, that whosoever should be against him, that person would not, in whom he trusted as a special friend. *It was thou*, says he, Psal. lv. 13, 14. "A man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

He was secondly, his dependant, *who did eat of my bread.* He set him at his table, he gave him a livelihood, maintained him and so obliged him to his interest in duty and gratitude.

2. The treatment with which he had met from that person. *He hath lifted up his heel against me.* It is a metaphor from a horse kicking against the man that lays meat before him. He broke all the ties of generosity and gratitude, and treated him insolently. A case not rare in times of trial, but very uneasy to them that meet with it. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

It is evident this was a typical event. And in the type it respects David and Ahithophel, or some other of David's unfaithful friends; in the Antitype it respects the Lord Jesus Christ and Judas. "I speak not of you all, said Jesus to his disciples, I know whom I have chosen; but, that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me." Here the first clause is left out, as not competent in the case of our Lord, who could not be deceived by any. However Judas was one of Christ's disciples, was trusted as steward of his family, and did eat his bread. I shall consider it, as it relates to the Lord Jesus Christ, typified by David.

Doctrine. It is a very grievous thing, that they who eat of the Lord's bread, should lift up the heel against him. There are two sorts of bread which are the Lord's bread.

1. Common bread, which they eat at their own table, for the nourishment of their bodies. Under this is comprehended all the necessaries and conveniences of this life; which in scripture are all represented by bread, because it is the most necessary, and most ordinary support of life.

This bread is the Lord's. He spreads the table for all the children of men, and all eat his bread; the rich and the poor are all maintained at his table of common providence. He is the proprietor and provisor of all the comforts of this life to men. He sits at the table head, and carves every one's portion, to some more and some less, according to his mere good pleasure. *Thou Lord openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.* And at his beck, men must rise from the table, and the table is drawn, or more liberally, or sparingly covered. So common bread is his bread and all eat of it.

2. Sacred and sacramental bread, which men eat at the Lord's table for the nourishment of their souls. This is his bread in a peculiar manner. *This, said he, is my body, which is broken for you.* This table is covered only in the visible church, and the bread upon it is prepared only for his real friends. "Eat, O friends, says he, drink, yea, drink abundantly O beloved." And so it is a very singular privilege to eat of it, and by eating of it, men profess themselves in a most solemn manner to be his friends. And this table is not owing as the other to common providence, but to a special providence and the sufferings of Christ.

Now according to the occasion of our present purpose, two things are to be handled,

I. That it is a very grievous thing, that they who eat of the Lord's common bread should lift up their heel against him.

II. It is a very grievous thing that they who eat of the Lord's sacramental bread, should lift up their heel against him. Let us then,

I. Show that it is a very grievous thing that they who eat of the Lord's common bread should lift up their heel against him.

Here let us first show how such lift up their heel against him.

Secondly, Whence it is that they who eat this bread lift up their heel against him; and thirdly, the evil of this practice.

I. How do such lift up their heel against him?

1. When they do not serve him by whom they are maintained. "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things." If we live by him, we should surely live for him. That men should have their bread daily at God's table, and yet not regard him, his will, laws, ways, work and interest in the world; is such a piece of contempt of God, as one can hardly, being in his right senses, be guilty of against a fellow-creature. "Now, because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified to the king." Ahithophel, one may suppose had given over eating at David's table, when thus he lifted up his heel against him. Yet such is the monstrous ingratitude and perverseness of men, that the more plentifully God lays to their hands, they in effect look on themselves as the less concerned to serve him. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord."

2. When their lusts are fed and fattened by God's good benefits bestowed on them, so that instead of being led to repentance thereby, they are led farther away from God. "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness, then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Again, says God, "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." It is evident that this has been the use of the prosperity and plenty there has been for some years. Men's lust of pride, and covetousness, have been made to grow. Hence so much oppression, racking one another's rents, and taking tacks over other men's heads: the more they had, the more they would have. The lust of luxury and wantonness, appearing in so much whoredom and uncleanness, Ezek. xvi. 49, 50.

3. When the good things which the Lord lays to people's hands are wasted on their lusts, to satisfy their cravings. "Ye ask, and

receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Thus the Lord is dishonoured, by the abusing of his good creatures to gluttony, drunkenness, prodigality, vanity, pride, and ambition; all which is to treat God after the manner adulteresses do their husbands, bestowing his tokens on lovers. This was Israel's sin. "For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal."

Lastly, When in any manner of way they live to the dishonour of God, their great benefactor, Rom. ii. 3,—6. Every wrong which men do to the glory of God, is a kicking against him that feeds them, for we have no bread, no necessaries or conveniences of life but those for which we are indebted to God.

II. We are to shew whence it is that they who eat this bread lift up their heel against him.

1. The fountain and spring head of it is the corruption of man's nature, which tends to make an ill use of every thing. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. As a vitiated stomach corrupts all the meat put into it; and as food given to a man in some cases strengthens his disease; so where the corruption of nature is not broken in the power of it, the more plentifully men are fed at the table of providence, they will readily be the worse. *Lest I be full*, says Agur, *and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?* Hence prosperity is the ruin of many, and is but like a sword in a mad man's hand.

2. The nearest cause of it is our forgetting our dependence on God for these things. Men consider not that it is God's bread that they eat, but are apt to think it is their own, as owing to their own industry. Therefore men sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense to their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous. "For she, says God, did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil." They consider not that they are accountable to God as stewards of what they have, and that the more they have laid to their hands the more is required of them, and their accounts will be the greater; but they look on themselves as lords of it. *Wherefore say my people, we are lords; we will come no more unto thee.* Let us consider,

III. The evil of this practice.

1. In itself, it is monstrous ingratitude. They are in it more brutish than the ox or ass. "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his masters crib; but Israel doth not know, my

people doth not consider." God feeds them and they dishonour him; he loads them with benefits, and they load him with indignities; God sustains them, and they rise up against him. It is doing evil for good which is devilish. Such conduct is weak and foolish in a high degree. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise?" Why do men rise up against their benefactor, before they be able to support themselves without him? Every moment our bread, our life, our all is at his mercy. What madness is it then to forget our duty!

2. This conduct in its effects is very dismal. It provokes God to take away his bread from men, and leave them to pine away in want. "Therefore, says God, will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof." Again, he says, "I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." This is the cause of the threatening season. This is it that gives ground to fear, misery, and want, to be coming upon us: And the Lord can soon turn his hand upon the best of us. This conduct brings other miseries along with want and scarcity. Want alone is great misery, but it is to be feared that Scotland's sins will heat the furnace seven times, and war and pestilence may come along with famine, if mercy prevent not. And this conduct will also aggravate men's condemnation in another world.

Use 1. Let us be humbled this day, under the abused goodness of God; reflect with shame and blushing on our not serving the Lord according to his bounty to us; on the feeding and fattening our corrupt lusts with his benefits. Bewail the corruption of our nature, and forgetting our dependence on God; call ourselves beasts and fools for treating our God at this rate; and tremble before him for fear of righteous judgments.

2. Let us reform and amend our ways, and resolve through his grace, to use more conscientiously the good things of this life, put into our hands; strive to honour him, who has fed us all our life long; and use all his benefits whatsoever, for his service and glory in the world; that according as he does more for us than for others, we may do more for him; and be faithful stewards of what God has given, laying it out for the service of God, and the relief of the poor and needy.

We now proceed to the other view of the subject, namely,

II. To shew that it is a very grevious thing, that they who eat of the Lord's sacramental bread should lift up their heel against him.

The professed friends of Christ do this various ways.

1. By untenderness in their walk. Hence the necessary caution, *walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise.* O the untenderness of professors at this day, in their words and actions by reason of which religion is evil spoken of! What shreds of the language of Ashdod, is to be found with those, from whom one would expect the language of Canaan; in their minced oaths, flying out in passion, with swearing and cursing. How often are the hands like Esau's, where the voice is Jacob's? That simplicity and uprightness in dealings with men, that might be expected, is often found wanting. How many can now freely fall in with those practices, that at one time for a world they dared not to have ventured upon. While they have been at the communion table and seen how dear their redemption from sin was to Christ; they have thought to stand aloof from their sins altogether; but alas! they have forgotten him and themselves too.

2. By returning to their openly profane courses. There are many in this our day of defection and apostacy, who cast off the mask of religion which they once wore, and pull off the vizor which they sometimes put on at communions, 2 Pet. ii. 20,—22 Beginning in the Spirit they end in the flesh, and bring up an ill report on our Lord's service, while they break his bands and cast his cords from them. They eat his bread and then turn their backs on him, and lift up the heel against him.

3. By carnality and worldliness in the ordinary frame of their hearts. Like Martha they are careful and troubled about many things, but forget the one thing needful. Lawful enjoyments, and necessary business, often blunt the edge of their affections towards God. Those who are sought for the kingdom, are often found hid among the stuff, and instead of coming away with Christ from Lebanon, are lying among the lions' dens.

4. By formality and listlessness in the duties of religion. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God." How many of us have been thus pining away since the last communion. The Lord has got many a dead carcase of duties from us since that time, as our secret retirements and seats in the church, may witness against us. And is not this contempt enough to give other things the cream of our affections, and such dull and dead service to the living God.

5. By secret dalliance with some bosom idol, and tampering with some idol of jealousy, to the slighting of Christ. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." When engaging with Christ, we engaged against all sin; but have we not after vows

made enquiry? Have we not hankered after some of our former idols, till we have greedily embraced them again, and laid them in our bosom, though once devoted to a curse. Like the fly going about the candle, till its wings being burnt, it falls down.

6. By slighting opportunities of communions with God. A very little thing will make many make to themselves silent Sabbaths. Public ordinances are not prized as means of communion with God. Some are rarely to be found at secret duties, and many grudging the time for the morning sacrifice in their families, lest it hinder their work. Few that having their time in their own hand, will seek God occasionally, but limit themselves to the morning and evening though other opportunities occur.

7. By the heart losing the esteem that it once had of Christ. O how precious has Christ been to some, who now see little about him, for which he is to be desired. If we carry fair outwardly with men, they cannot see our hearts, losing the love of them, but our God looks to the heart, and marks its backslidings, saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."

8. By losing the delight they once had in communion with God, and wearying of converse with him in duties. "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou has been weary of me, O Israel." This too much appears in the heartless service which he gets from us. "Ye said also, behold, what a weariness is it? And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts." Where are they that count the Sabbath a delight, and long for the return of it? Nay, does not the false carnal heart misgive at the very news of the approach of a communion.

Lastly, By the habitual neglect of the most important duties of practical godliness, as, the life of faith, Gal. ii. 20. The way of improving Christ for sanctification, is an absolute mystery to many professors. The promises stand in the Bible, but are useless to them in the several steps of life; their comforts come from another quarter.

Another neglected duty is the habitual acknowledging of God in all our ways. The command is, "In all thy ways acknowledge him; and he shall direct thy paths." Little care to discern sin and duty in particular cases. Seldom sent to our knees to beg light of the Lord for our direction in particular cases.

Self examination is also neglected. Alas! for the habitual neglect of this duty. Many never look near it, but at a communion time. And it is to be feared many make but slight work of it then, and perhaps neglect it altogether. Surely our hearts are not so worthy to be trusted, but that there is much need to be often calling them to an account.

Mourning for our own sins, and the sins of the land. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Alas! for the hardness of heart, and the private spirit with which we are plagued. O what wonder that there is such small measure of comforts at our communions, when mourning for our sins beforehand is so little in use. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." These thirty years and more there was not so great cause for mourning for the sins of the land, yet I doubt if in all that time, there was so little mourning for them.

Lastly, Commending Christ and religion to others, who are strangers to him, and labouring to propagate religion. "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations, therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." Many are at pains to corrupt others this day, and so are agents for Satan; but alas! few are agents for Christ. Amen.

Ettrick, May 28, 1721.

[The Sabbath before the Communion.]

PRESENT ROOM FOR SINNERS IN CHRIST'S HOUSE.

SERMON XX.

LUKE xiv. 22.

And yet there is room.

IN the first part of this verse, the servant reports that he had obeyed his master's second order, and that many had complied with the invitation. But though these had come in, he adds, *and yet there is room.* In Christ's house, there is much empty room for more guests. This is a comfortable word for those who have not yet complied with the invitations of the gospel; the doors are not yet shut, and such sinners may yet have access to Christ.

Our Lord hath often covered a table for us in the gospel, and no doubt some have answered the gospel call, and by faith sit down at the gospel feast. But while some have risen up at God's call, have not many sat still? While some have gone to the marriage, have not many staid in the tents of sin; when some have been pursuing the interest of their souls, others have been minding nothing, but the world and their lusts. We come yet to you, O slighters of

Christ, with the glad news that yet there is room. We are allowed doctrinally to open the doors of Christ's house to you, and invite you all to come in; being not without apprehensions that the peaceable and ordinary dispensation of the gospel among us, may be drawing near an end. Sinners out of Christ are out of God's favour, covenant, and family. Slighters of Christ have refused the privilege, but yet there is room or place for them.

Doctrine. For those who have not yet embraced and closed with Christ in the offer of the gospel, yet there is room.

There are three very different voices sounding this day, in the ears of rational creatures out of heaven.

1. The fallen angels hear a dreadful voice, that there never was, is, nor shall be, room for them. They sinned, but no Mediator was ever provided for them. They were the first who ventured to break over the hedge of the law, and God made them dreadful instances of his justice and severity. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Their chains you see are everlasting, their prison darkness; and nothing awaits them but judgment. They left their habitation, and there is no room for them any more. They see a feast is provided, but they know they shall never taste of it, but stand gnashing their teeth at distinguishing grace.

2. Damned sinners hear another voice, namely, That there was once room for them, but there shall be room no more for ever. "The master of the house hath risen up, and hath shut to the door." They had their day, but in their day, they knew not the things which belonged to their peace, and now they are hid from their eyes. Those with whom they sat in the same church, and heard the same gospel, are now in heaven: but now all they can hear is, *There was room.* And while there was room for them, they only sought after the world, and their lusts: but now the door is shut upon them, and that there was room, gnaws, and will gnaw, their conscience for ever.

3. You hear this day a blessed joyful voice, *Yet there is room.* Sinners! you are standing without, you have hitherto slighted Christ. But the door is not yet shut on you. What is wrong may be rectified. *Yet there is room.*

In discoursing upon this subject. I shall,

I. Enquire for what there is yet room.

II. Where there is yet room.

III. Confirm the doctrine. We are then,

I. To enquire for what there is yet room. Sinners, yet there is room.

1. For your retracting your refusal of Christ, and his salvation, for your taking your word again. Christ has been offered to you, but many of you have said in effect, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* You would have none of him. Now if he should take you at your word, you are ruined without remedy. Should he pass that sentence "I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." Then there is no more hope for ever. He might have dealt thus with you, yea, he might have dealt with you as with Ananias and Sapphira. But yet there is room. Take your word again; and if yet you will consent to take Christ, you shall have him.

2. There is yet room for your subscribing the covenant. God in Christ has sent down an open copy of the covenant of grace among us, and sent his ministers to gather subscriptions to it, by which souls may be entered into the covenant. Many have set their names to it. "O my soul, says David, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord. And gather, says God, my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." But after all, yet there is room. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand, unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." God is yet saying to you, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Believe this word with application to yourselves. Embrace the covenant, for yet there is room.

3. There is room for repentance. You have been fools and madmen, working out your own ruin without fear or trembling. You have done what will destroy yourselves, if it be not undone again. Yet there is room for repentance. There was room for it in the first covenant, it was a piece of work, which once marred would never put right again. There is no room for it in hell. But here there is room. Esau despised the birth-right, and there was room for repentance to him. But yet the voice of the Lord to you is, after all that you have done, "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Though it be the eleventh hour with some of you, yet there is room.

Lastly, There is room for you, the worst of you, may yet come in, "Whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." And again, "Behold, saith Jesus, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Despisers and rejectors of

Christ, he yet calls you. He has no need of you nor me, but his house is not yet filled, and it must be filled, and yet there is room. "All that the Father giveth me, says he, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." Many has he taken in, who were amongst the worst, and he has room for more even of that kind. "Go, says he to his servants, into the highways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." We proceed,

II. To show where there is room. There is room,

1. In the door for you, that you may enter in by it. Jesus Christ himself is the door. "I am, says he, the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." He is willing to receive you. The door is opened in the offer of the gospel. It is wide opened, so as the worst of sinners are declared capable of access to the Father, coming by him. "And such, says Paul to the Corinthians, were some of you," even the worst of sinners, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." But without Jesus Christ there is no access. "I am, says he, the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is true in these days in which the doctrine of the gospel is sinking, the door is opened by some, only so far as to let in those that are so and so qualified, as if men behoved to be half cured before they may come to the physician. But God's word sets it wide open. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. And the Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Thus you see the word of God sets the door wide open to let in all who will enter, be their case what it will. Enter then, O sinner, no angel with a flaming sword stands here to guard the tree of life. The partition wall is broken down, strangers are welcome to come within the holy ground. Christ is the door. Let not the brightness of his face so terrify thee, nor the divine glory so affright thee, as to make you stand back from him, for the divinity is vailed with humanity, that sinners may see God and not die. "Having therefore boldness, brethren, to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh."

2. There is room in the house for you. Christ's house is not yet filled. If it were so, the door would be shut. Sinners you are without, wandering up and down on the mountains of vanity, a

ready prey to the devouring lion. Why will you not come in, where you may be safe? There is room enough for you in our Father's house, and all who are in it, have bread enough and to spare, why then will you perish?

There is room for you in the lower house. There are two great families on earth. Christ's family, and the devil's family. We are born members of the devil's family, but Christ is willing to take you into his, yea, he invites you into it. "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." You that are standing at the foot of mount Sinai, within the dominion of the law, as a covenant of works, you are welcome to mount Zion, the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly of the church of the first-born; where, though you be under the discipline of the family, you shall be beyond the reach of the curse. There is room for you here in the quality of *servants*. He is saying unto you, "Why stand you here all the day idle? Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." Our Lord is saying to you once more, "Choose you this day whom you will serve?" Christ or your lusts? He has no need of you, nor your service. He has thousands of angels to minister unto him, yet he has left room for you to be taken in amongst the number of his servants. And can you choose such a glorious, yea, such a gracious Master? He binds his service on believers with the cords of love, first gives them a title to the eternal reward, and then bids them work, and even the rods laid on them, remove not his free love, Psal. lxxxix. 23. and downwards.

There is room for you as *friends*, which is yet more. "Henceforth, says he, I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." It is no small matter to be a friend of the house. But yet there is room for you to be Christ's bosom friends, though before enemies. Friends to whom he will communicate his secrets. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." He is a friend that can do you good, when all other friends are helpless to you, even at a dying hour; your friends in the world may then close your eyes, prepare the cold winding sheet, get the grave ready, but he can carry your soul to God the Judge, and present you blameless before him in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

There is room for you, as sons and daughters, to be children of the house. "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." He has many children, a numerous, a powerful seed, a mighty offspring, the fruit of the travail of his soul; and has made a glorious appearance with them already before his Father, saying, *Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me.* Yet there is room for more. Adopting grace is not yet exhausted. The inheritance is large, there is enough for all that will come to him. He will not quarrel your extraction, though base, nor the wretched condition in which he finds you, if you will but now come in, Ezekiel xvi.

You may be received in the quality of the spouse of Christ. He says to you, "All things are ready, come ye to the marriage." The everlasting marriage covenant is proposed to you. If you be willing to match with him, he is willing to match with you. Believe the promise of the gospel with particular application to yourselves. Say amen to the covenant, and he is yours and you are his.

There is room for you in the upper house. The vail is rent in twain, and there is access for you into the holiest of all. Christ hath opened heaven to us, which Adam's sin bolted against us; and good news, In Christ's Father's house there are many mansions, and he is there employed in preparing a place for you. If you will come to Christ, *You shall be pillars in the temple of God, and go no more out.* It is a holy place where no unclean thing can enter, but he will make you meet for it by the sanctification of his Spirit.

3. There is room for you at the table. Christ's table is well furnished, even the table of gospel ordinances in this lower world. "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." There are many excellent dishes on it. Peace, pardon, joy in the Holy Ghost, even all the benefits of the everlasting covenant. Whatever is suitable to your case. Gold tried in the fire, to enrich you, white raiment to clothe and adorn you, and eye salve, to anoint your eyes that you may see. And at this table there is abundance of room. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price."

4. There is room for you in the heart of the Master of the feast. Why does he call you, if it were not so. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Set but your face homeward, and the Father's bowels will yearn towards the returning prodigal, he

will meet you by the way. Why were Christ's arms stretched out on the cross but to embrace you, and his side pierced; but to show that there was room in his heart for you. We are now to proceed,

III. To confirm the doctrine. Consider,

1. The mercy of God lying open to sinners through Christ. "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." I say then through Christ, for God out of Christ is a consuming fire to sinners, as so much dry stubble. Heb. xii. last. This is seen in devils and reprobates that reject Christ. But coming to God through him, you will find a fountain of mercy overflowing. Mercy is one of the great letters of God's name. "He is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands." If misery be with you, mercy is with him. "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy." Are your sins many, well he is "not only merciful and gracious, but he is plenteous in mercy." There is a multitude of mercies with him. *He delighteth in mercy.* It is a pleasure to him to show mercy to the miserable. If a little mercy will not serve your purpose, then one mercy shall be added to another. For God hath said, *mercy shall be built up for ever.* Have your sins in effect carried you down to the lowest hell, mercy will bring you up again. "For great is thy mercy toward me, saith David, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." Do your sins reach the clouds, God's mercy is above them, for it *is in the heavens.*

2. Consider the sufferings of Christ to procure room for sinners, Heb. x. 19.—22. The first Adam forfeited our room in God's favour, but the second Adam by his death hath made room again for those who were thrust out. And here cast your eyes upon the following things.

1. The quality of the person that suffered. The divine nature in the person of the Son, was united to the human nature, and so the blood shed for the redemption of sinners was the blood of God. "To feed, says the apostle, the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." In these our unhappy days, in which there appears a conspiracy against our glorious Redeemer, and the doctrine of the gospel is a going and entering into a cloud of darkness, not only is the purchase of Christ for his people much dishonoured, but the foundation of Christianity is struck at, in denying the supreme Godhead of the Son and his equality with the Father, which has been at length followed with monstrous blasphemies, and blasphemous practices against the ever blessed Trinity. But wo, wo, to mankind sinners, if Christ be not supreme God. The saints

are yet in their sins, their faith and hope and all is vain, razed from the foundation. For then his sufferings not being of infinite value, cannot equal the offence done to an infinite God. But know assuredly, sinners, that yet there is room, upon the account of Christ's sufferings, for he is the *Father's fellow*, Zech. xiii. 7. *the Father's equal*, Philip. ii. 6. "He is Jehovah, as for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the holy one of Israel. And this is his name, whereby he shall be called the Lord our righteousness."

2. The nature of his sufferings. They were of various kinds. He suffered in his good name, in all his offices, in his body and in his soul. He bare the curse. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He endured the wrath of his Father in our stead. Under this, "He was poured out like water, and all his bones were out of joint; his heart was like wax, it was melted in the midst of his bowels." He met with no indulgence. *God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.* He answered all the demands of justice, and the law, in favour of elect sinners. Now,

3. The end of his sufferings, was to make room for sinners in God's favour. To redeem a forfeited heaven, and to bring back to God those who were expelled his house in the loins of Adam their father.

Now finally, For these great purposes, his sufferings were fully efficacious. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin. And this blood purgeth our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." However deep the guilt and stain of our sins be, the blood of Christ is able to take it away, as an ocean poured upon a house on fire would quench it instantly.

4. Consider that the holy scriptures plainly hold forth Christ to be an able and willing Saviour. "His name is Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us; who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." He complains that sinners will not come to him, that he might save them. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." He is lifted up on the pole of the gospel, that sinners may look to him and be saved: And the command is, "look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth." Jesus is the rose of sharon, the rose of the field to which every one may have access. There are in him waters for washing the most polluted, and every one that thirsteth is invited to come to these waters. There are in him streams of water to re-

fresh and fructify the desert and the wilderness. If the streams may be thought capable of drying up, there is in him a fountain, open and free, *A fountain for sin and uncleanness.* If that be too little there are rivers; for the man Jesus, *Shall be as rivers of water in a dry place.* And if these are not enough, there are depths of the sea. *Thou Lord wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

5. Consider all things are ready for your reception and entertainment. "All things are ready, come ye to the marriage." If all be ready, surely yet there is room for you. The Father is ready, and well pleased that sinners be matched with his Son and become heirs of glory. Of Jesus, he saith, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* The glorious Bridegroom is ready to receive you into the marriage covenant, "I will, says he, betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies." The Holy Spirit is ready, and says *unto you, come.* The marriage contract is ready, the covenant drawn up, no more to do but to set your name to it; the marriage feast is ready: there is nothing wanting but your consent.

6. Consider that you are invited to come in, yea, we are authorized expressly, "To compel you to come in, that his house may be filled." Now would that be the case, if there were not yet room? And in the invitations consider that they are very large and extensive. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. And whosoever will may take of the water of life freely." If you had these invitations of your own framing, could you make them more comprehensive? Say not sinners, you are not fit to come to Christ: sure I am, you are not fit to stay away from him. Come to him for all you need, and embrace a full Christ, *for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* Besides the invitations are made with an express provision, that your sinfulness and unworthiness shall not prevent your welcome to Christ, if you will come. "He that hath no money, come ye buy and eat, yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Yea, these invitations are commands which you are peremptorily enjoined to obey upon your peril. *And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

7. Consider that all who have gone before you to Christ, have found there was room, and why will you not venture forward. They are made to sing that blessed song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." Turn over the Bible, look at

the history of past times, who did ever perish that came to him. Was not Paul welcome, and that for an example to others. "Yea, for this cause he obtained mercy, that in him first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, the thief on the cross, the very murderers of the Saviour, the Corinthians, all have found room in his house, and a welcome reception. Go then thither, where others have succeeded so well before you. And if you die there, and make your grave at his door, I assure you, if it be so, you will be the first, there is yet no broken ground there.

8. Consider, that if unworthiness, vileness and misery, would have turned away the eyes of Jesus from the children of men, he had never taken in one of them. His door would have been shut for ever upon them. Did not he find all the fair ones now in glory, at one time lying in their blood with no eye to pity them, nor hand to help them? All the company of the redeemed must cast down their crowns at his feet, and give glory to them that washed them in his own blood. If you stand back till you be worthy, you will never come.

Lastly, Consider that the great end of the plan of man's salvation through Jesus Christ, is to exalt the riches of free grace. *It is of faith that it might be by grace.* The more desperate your disease is, the more glorious will the cure be. Your sinfulness will serve to exalt free grace in Christ Jesus. Will you then give him the glory of your salvation or not? "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

Use. 1. Come in then, O sinners, come off from your natural state, from your sins, from the mountains of vanity; come into Christ, into the covenant, into the state of favour with God, through him. Yet there is room for you. And that every one of you may either be obliged to come into Christ, or be left without, inexcusable this day, I shall lay before you, what may solve all your objections.

1. Though there be many in already, yet there is room for you. Many have come from the east, and from the west, from the south, and from the north, and have sat down with Abraham in the kingdom of God. But the house is not yet full. The Master is still expecting more guests. Days have been in which souls have flocked to Christ like doves to their windows. And yet there is room. If it were not so the doors would be shut and the servants called in from inviting any more.

They who will not come into Christ while there is room, must soon take their room in the pit of destruction, Rev. xxi. 8.

Use 2. Make room then for Christ with you. Room in your hearts, room in your houses. I would call unto all, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight." Christ is coming once more among us in a solemn and awful manner, in the holy ordinance of the supper. O Christians, communicants, make room for his triumphant entry. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in. Make room for him and all his salvation; *As made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* Be persuaded of your own utter emptiness, your need of all things, that you may take him for your all.

Again, Make room for him, in all his offices, as a prophet, priest, and king. Search out the rebels, lay all your sins before him, that he may remove the guilt of them by his blood, and break the power of them by his Spirit; and thus redeem you from all iniquity, and purify you unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Finally, Make room for him and his cross. Consider what you do, lay your account with all the hardships you may meet with in following him whithersoever he goes. Amen.

Ettrick, August 12, 1722.

[Sabbath before the Sacrament.]

HUNGERING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.

SERMON XXI.

MATTHEW v. 6.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

WE are called to a solemn spiritual feast for the nourishment of our souls. But it is often seen, that many go to it, who yet come away empty. The fault is not in the feast itself, as if the provision were scanty; but in the guests, who often sit down without an appetite. Our text, which is a part of our Lord's sermon on the mount, discovering who are the truly blessed or happy, points out to us the worthy communicants, who shall be entertained at the Lord's table. And in it there are two things.

1. The hungry and thirsty after righteousness, declared blessed, by him who knows exactly, who are blessed and who not, as being the puchaser and bestower of the blessing. The world accounts those the happy ones who are full; Christ accounts them happy who hunger and thirst. But it is not every sort of hunger and thirst, but hunger and thirst after righteousness; those who are longing and earnestly desiring righteousness, as ever a hungry man desired bread, or a thirsty man drink.

2. There is the ground on which they are declared blessed; *For they shall be filled.* The appetite of their souls shall be satisfied. There is many a gaping mouth in the world, some are gaping for one thing, some for another, and all to satisfy their lusts: they shall never be satisfied, but they who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. The Lord himself shall fill them as the sheep of his pasture.

Doctrine. They who hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be filled.

In speaking to this, I shall consider,

I. The righteousness for which these happy persons hunger and thirst.

II. Show what this happy hunger and thirst after this righteousness is.

III. Their blessedness, or the fill secured to them. We are then,

I. To consider the righteousness for which these happy persons hunger and thirst.

1. It is an imputed righteousness, in which they may stand before God, obtain remission of sin, and the favour of God. "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The soul sensible of the damning nature of sin, and the naughtiness of all men's own righteousness, and the severity of God's justice, will be pained and scorched, through the apprehension of the want of a righteousness to cover it before the Lord, as ever one was with hunger and thirst. Their great question will be, Wherewithal shall I appear before the Lord? How shall I be in case to stand before the awful tribunal?

2. It is an implanted righteousness, by which they may walk before the Lord in the land of the living and please him. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Deeply sensible of this depravity of nature, they cry with David, each for himself, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." They seek the renewal of their nature, being changed into the image of God, and to be made par-

takers of the divine nature. This constitutes a righteousness or holiness of heart and life, that one may speak and act in a holy and righteous manner. "Oh! says David, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." This they who shall be filled, hunger and thirst after. In a word, it is a righteousness without them, and within them, a righteousness, upon them and in them. It is righteousness and holiness. This is the object of the desires of the happy soul. We are,

II. To show what this happy hunger and thirst after this righteousness is. There is in it,

1. A sense of want of righteousness. The prodigal's return to his father commenced, when *he began to be in want*. The hungry soul is cured of the disease of the Laodiceans. Such persons no longer imagine themselves *rich and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, but* feel themselves *wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*. However they have slept long, their eyes are now opened, and they see their want of righteousness. They are guilty, and have nothing of their own to cover them before God. They see that they are defiled, corrupted, and all over unclean in heart and life. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away." Whatever they have thought, they dare no more say to any, *I am holier than thou*. But with the leper cry out, *unclean, unclean*.

2. A painful sense of the need of righteousness. *I perish*, said the prodigal, *with hunger*. They do not merely see a want of it, and as many self-condemned sinners do; but as the hungry man is pained, and uneasy for want of bread, and the thirsty for lack of drink; so are they for want of righteousness. The hunger for righteousness seizes them, and they find a pressing need of it. The day has been that they have reigned as kings without righteousness, imputed or implanted. But now they can do so no more, they find they must be righteous and holy, or else perish.

3. A sense of utter inability to help themselves. See the case the poor hungry soul is brought to, "When the poor and needy, says Isaiah, seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst." There has been a famine of righteousness in the world ever since Adam's fall; were there as little bread as there is righteousness among us, most of us would be starved to death, and all of us would look with pale faces. There is some righteousness indeed, but it is not the produce of our country, it is all imported from the King's country, and they who have got of it have none to spare. The wise virgins could afford none of their oil to the foolish virgins. So

the poor soul looking abroad among his fellows, sees there is no help for him in them; looking within himself, sees nothing but emptiness there; and is like Hagar, laying down the child for dead, for lack of water in the wilderness.

4. An esteem and value of righteousness above all things else. *Unto them who believe Christ is precious.* Those who are sore pressed with hunger, value meat above other things, and therefore they will part with any thing for food. So will the soul hungering after righteousness. *The man who found the pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.* An imputed righteousness to cover the soul before the Lord, and an implanted righteousness to restore the soul to the image of God, is the chief thing which the hungering soul values, and will be content to let all other things go, so as the soul may gain these. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

5. An earnest longing desire after righteousness. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The hungry soul hath its appetite sharpened, and goes out in desire after Christ and his grace. Hear the breathings of the hungry soul, "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! O God thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." They see a beauty and glory in righteousness, for which it is to he desired, it is the thing that is most suitable to their case. Hence they desire it above all things, and the strength of their affections is bestowed upon it, as the one thing needful. This they earnestly desire of the Lord, and will seek after.

Lastly. An unsatisfiedness with all things, while the soul's desire after righteousness is not satisfied. Fill a hungry man's pocket with gold, clothe him in scarlet, cover a table to him with the most precious vessels, what can all these do for his relief? So whatever the hungry soul may have, under the want of Christ and his righteousness and grace, it cannot be satisfied; there is still a restlessness in the heart, till it be set on the breast of the divine consolations. We proceed,

III. To consider their blessedness, or the fill secured to the hungry and thirsty soul. *They shall be filled.* We may take up this in these four things.

1. God will set meat before them. He himself will entertain them. It is not they shall fill themselves, but they shall be filled, to show the efficacious working of divine grace, in hungry souls. "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst. I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." To them will the Spirit of the Lord say, *Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.* God is well pleased with that temper of mind wrought by his own Spirit in them, and he will be their shepherd, and see that they do not want. He will furnish their table to them.

2. They shall eat and feed on the provision set before them. "The meek shall eat and shall be satisfied, they shall praise the Lord that seek him; your heart shall live for ever." Their hungering shall make way for feeding, for believing, use-making and applying Christ and his righteousness to their own souls. There is no filling without eating and drinking, so the promise of filling, implies the promise of believing, which is the spiritual eating and drinking. Though meat be set before a hungry man, if he put not forth his hand, and take and eat, he may starve for all the meat before him; so the hungry soul must be a believing soul, that it may be filled.

3. They shall partake of righteousness from heaven. They shall get what they desire. Righteousness they long for and righteousness shall be given them. *They shall receive righteousness from the God of their salvation.* They shall get the white garments, which will cover their spiritual nakedness; and so obtain remission of sins, reconciliation with God, adoption into his family, and a right to glory. They shall get grace to sanctify them, to subdue their corruptions, to strengthen them for duty, and against temptations, and to conform them more and more to the image of God. They shall get Christ himself, and all things in him and with him. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

4. Their souls shall be satisfied in this participation of righteousness. It is not only said, they shall eat, but also *they shall be satisfied.* They shall have a rest to their conscience, by his atoning blood, and a rest to their hearts, by his sanctifying Spirit. They had a sense of want, that created them an appetite, and sharp desire; their sense of enjoyment, shall create them delight. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn, and their wine increased." There is enough in Christ's imputed righteousness which he implants in the soul, to satisfy the soul. It is suitable to the desires of the immortal soul, and therefore satisfying, as being perfecting to its nature.

This filling of the soul, as in the case of the body, is carried on by degrees. And,

The beginning of it is in the hungry soul's application to Christ by faith, closing with him, and fixing on the breasts of his consolations. "I am, said Jesus, the bread of life: he that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." The first taste the soul gets of Christ in believing, it hath enough, not indeed to stay its pursuit after more of Christ, but after the world, and the lusts thereof. It finds so much in Christ that it is resolved and convinced it needs not to go to seek satisfaction any where else. "But whosoever, saith Jesus, drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life." This makes the soul say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." In him it takes up its everlasting rest. *For we which have believed do enter into rest.* Thus they are set down to a full table.

The progress of this filling, is in the soul's abiding in Christ, and continuing with him, making use of him daily, for the supply of all its wants. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, says Jesus, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Though the communion table is but seldom covered, yet the Lord has still a covered table, for his children to feed at, which is never drawn. "For my flesh, says he, is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." And they may still be filling their souls with righteousness, by faith making use of Christ for all; though alas! there are many times long interruptions in their spiritual feeding.

Finally, The consummation of this, is in the believers' being ever with the Lord in glory. "Where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." There they shall be completely filled; there they shall be eternally filled without loathing, and have an eternal appetite, without any the least uneasiness. "For there grows the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree, are for the healing of the nations."

Use 1. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. That those who are not hungering and thirsting after righteousness, are not meet guests for the Lord's table, and they will get no good of it, if they come to it. There can be no just complaint on our Lord's house, though some go from his table, and get not a meal.

For such are found not to be pressed with spiritual hunger, why then should they be filled? They are not meet guests at a table covered for hungry souls, for they will loathe the food that is set before them there, and as they are not meet for it, so they are not welcome to it; *they have not the wedding garment*, and they will be sent away empty from the full table. For while "God filleth the hungry with good things, the rich he sends empty away. And such are,

All sleeping Christians, who, though they have grace in the root, yet have it not in exercise, Song v. 1,—3. They have lost the sense of their souls' need, and their desires after spiritual things are sunk, and a woful listlessness and indisposition for the food of their souls is fallen to them; this is the case of many at this day.

All unregenerate persons, who having nothing of the new nature in them, are incapable of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the proper nourishment of it. They are not capable of relishing spiritual things, because themselves are wholly carnal, and therefore can savour nothing but the world and their lusts. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

All presumptuous, insensible, unhumbled sinners, who are content with their own condition in spiritual matters, and are no way desirous to get it made better. They think they stand in need of nothing. They are not in pain for want of righteousness, but can hold on in their present case, blessing themselves in their hearts, that they are not so bad as others, or have attained to a form of godliness.

All such whose hearts are so hungering and thirsting after other things, that they have no desires for Christ, and his grace. There are many in whom there is such a ferment of hellish desires after the profits, pleasures and vanities of the world, who are so thirsting after this and the other good thing of the world to themselves; thirsting after revenge on their neighbours, and for satisfaction to this and the other lust, that no true desires after Christ and his grace, can get sprung up in their souls, James iv. 2, 3. 1 Pet. ii. 1—3.

2. We learn that those whose souls are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, may come forward to the Lord's table, with confident expectations that they shall be filled. They have the Lord's promise for it in the text, which is an excellent token for the communion. And we might promise ourselves a good time of it, if there were a strong cry of hunger and thirst among the children. For God promises "to pour water upon him that is thirsty, and

floods upon the dry ground." Were we gaping for righteousness like the parched ground, he would come and rain righteousness upon us. And that you may know this token, and whether you have it, take these signs.

True hunger and thirst after righteousness, after the Lord, *whose name is the Lord our righteousness.* A thirst after righteousness separated from Christ himself, is a vitious appetite of legal and self-righteous persons, by which they would build up themselves on another foundation than that which God has laid in Zion. Therefore the saints still hunger and thirst for the Lord himself, *in whom they have righteousness and strength.*

It is a hunger and thirst after all righteousness. Many profane and careless souls, will desire to partake of Christ's imputed righteousness to save their souls from hell, but they are not anxious to get holiness of heart and life. Others are at great pains to conform themselves to the law, in their life, but they lay so much weight upon that, that they are not solicitous for the imputed righteousness of Christ. But the sincere soul hungers for both, Christ for justification and sanctification.

It is a hunger and thirst after all the parts and degrees of righteousness. The hungry soul has use for all of Christ's righteousness, the righteousness of his birth, life, death, and must be covered all over with it, without mixing their own with it in any part. And it is set for all the parts of inherent righteousness, of nature, heart and life, in every point, even in that where their weak side lies. And they will not sit down on any measure or degree of it, but still be aspiring to perfection. "For every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure. And forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, they press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

It puts the soul on resolute endeavours after righteousness. The hungry will use every mean and make every exertion to be filled. Discouragements will not break off its pursuit. Necessity has no law. And hunger will break through stone walls. So if your hunger quicken you to seek after Christ resolutely, it is a good sign.

The true hunger of the soul cannot be otherwise satisfied than by the enjoyment of Christ. Many have some hunger after Christ, but not finding their souls satisfied in him, they go away to the creature and seek that in them, which they could not find in him.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Labour to get this hunger and thirst raised in your souls. Sharpen your appetite after your spiritual food. Consider the Lord is covering a table for us. It is a pity we

should want an appetite for it. The paschal lamb was to be wholly eaten, so appetite was necessary, and so it is also with us.

Again, who knows how far we may have to go upon this meal. But if we hunger not, we will not eat.

Consider also that it will readily fare with you according to your appetite. If you have an appetite, you shall be filled, for it is a sign of the new nature, which God will see to support. The appetite is of God's giving and he will satisfy it. His faithfulness is engaged in the cause. Amen.

Yarrow Communion, Sept. 9, 1722.

[Sabbath afternoon.]

CHRISTIANS STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

SERMON XXII.

2 TIMOTHY ii. 1.

Thou therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

IN his banqueting house, Christ displays his banner of love over his people. For those who are fed at his table must arise and fight their way to Immanuel's land, to which they have professed themselves to be travelling. And our text is an exhortation to animate them in their journey. "Thou therefore my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

These words are a practical inference drawn from the doctrine of the preceding chapter, namely, that God had already bestowed on Timothy, and the rest of the saints, great things, verses 7,—9. That the gospel was such a noble cause that none need to be ashamed of suffering on the account of it, ver. 10, 11, 12. That God is able to see to his people in all circumstances and make a good account of them at last, ver. 12. That there was a great falling away from the good ways of the Lord, ver. 15. From all which he exhorts Timothy to be strong. In the text we have,

1. The compellation *my son*. Paul was an aged man, Timothy was young. Elder Christians should excite and animate the younger sort to the vigorous pursuit of religion. In this case surely days should speak. It is a chief part of our generation work, to be concerned for a right turn to the rising generation. And the slackness

in this, owing partly to the untowardness of the younger sort, and partly to the elder, their falling from their first love, is a sad prognostic of worse days following our evil days, if sovereign grace do not interpose.

Paul had a peculiar respect to Timothy. If he had not begotten him to the faith, he had surely instructed him more fully in it, and had him often with him. If there be any to whom we bear a peculiar regard, we ought to show it in a peculiar concern for the welfare of their souls. And therefore as we ought to have a peculiar regard to our families, we should show it by a peculiar concern for the welfare of their souls, in instructing, and inciting them to the good ways of the Lord.

2. There is a necessary duty to which he incites him. *Be strong.* He supposes that both as a minister and as a Christian, he would meet with opposition in an evil world, and that he behoved not to be driven out of his Christian course by it, nor faint and give it over: but he wills him valiantly to stand his ground, and go on his way through all the difficulties with which he might meet.

3. He gives him true advice, what way he might do this. "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Some take this for the thing about which he was to be strong, As if he had said, be strong in preaching the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This, I doubt not, is the great thing ministers are called to aim at in their preaching; *even to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.* All other preaching without it will never make good Christians. In this grace only is discovered the way of justifying the guilty, and sanctifying the unholy. But yet I think the simple, plain, and native import of the words, which is always the preferable, is to direct Timothy to the grace treasured up in Christ, to be communicated to his members, in partaking of which, out of weakness, he might be made strong, Eph. vi. 10. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

Doctrine.—They who have a mind for heaven, must be strong, and that in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, if ever they would get there. In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall,

I. Consider this duty incumbent on all who have a mind for heaven, namely, *to be strong.*

II. I shall consider the direction, namely, that those who would be strong, "Must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." I am then,

I. To consider this duty incumbent on all who have a mind for heaven, namely, *to be strong.*

Here I shall state and answer two questions.

Question 1st. What is it to be strong in the sense of the text? And,

1. It presupposeth one thing, namely, they must be spiritually alive. A sick man has some strength, but a dead man has none at all. A child of God has a little strength, when he is even weakest. But the ungodly are quite destitute of spiritual strength. "For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." If you be not born again, and really united to the Lord Jesus by his quickening Spirit dwelling in you, your carcases will fall in the wilderness, though you have eaten at the Lord's table. "For except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. If a man, saith Jesus, abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Why is it that many cannot resist a temptation, but are led captive by it, and cannot do one duty in a right manner? Why, but because their living lusts prey upon their souls without resistance; because their souls are spiritually dead. O communicants see to your state.

To be strong imports three things.

1. To be ready for action, according to the difficulties you may meet with in your way. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." No person will get to heaven sleeping. Heaven is a rest, and that supposeth those who come there, not to be loiterers, but labourers. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." The promise is to him that overcometh, though not for his, but Christ's overcoming, Rev. iii. 21. The wind will be in your face, if you set your face heavenward in good earnest; so you must be strong, and prepared to make your way against it, however hard it blow.

2. That you be resolved. Thus David exhorts Solomon, "Take heed now, said he, for the Lord hath chosen thee, to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong and do it." That is, be fully resolved and peremptory, so as not to be diverted by any emerging difficulties. O Christians, communicants, put on a resoluteness of spirit to be forward in your way to heaven, come what will. "Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and cleave unto the Lord, with purpose of heart." If this resolute purpose be not formed in your hearts by grace, you will never get safe to your journey's end. For if you be of those that may be broken, you will be broken; in regard you will be tried to the utmost, to cause you to give it over.

3. It imports that you be of good courage. Say to them that are

of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not. Put on holy courage to face the difficulties you may meet with in your Christian course. When the heart fails in such encounters, the hands must needs hang down; and therefore unbelief is a worm at the root of all Christian endeavours. But faith animates a Christian, inspires his soul with holy courage, and so causes him to go through the most difficult steps of his way.

Quest. 2nd. What need is there to be strong? If you have no mind for heaven, you may fold your hands and lie at your ease; the flood runs strong enough to carry you of itself to destruction, where there is no rowing against the stream. But if you mind for heaven, you have need to be strong. For,

1. You have much work before you. The work of your own salvation is upon your hand, Phil. ii. 12. You have also to serve your generation, by the will of God. You have much work laid to your hand. Though it is not doing and working, but believing that is required of you to enter you into the covenant personally, and to interest you savingly in Jesus Christ, and his salvation; yet being in the covenant in Christ, by faith, you have as much to do, as the broad law of the ten commandments carries out to you in first and second table duties. And if you habitually and knowingly neglect any of them, you will thereby evidence, that you are yet lying in your natural state, quite without strength, and without Christ. You will not want suffering work also. "For we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." We may assure you of private sufferings. For every follower of Christ, must take up his own cross. And you have need to lay your account with public sufferings also; for they are so usual in the cause of religion, that all Christ's disciples are martyrs, though not in action, yet in affection and resolution. So you need to be strong.

2. You will meet with much opposition in your work. Satan is a strong enemy, and he will be at your right hand to resist you. The world also will oppose you in your work. The men of the world will be agents for the devil against you. You will have the weight of their example to strive against, and perhaps their tongues and hands will both be employed to divert you from your work. The things of the world, the cares of it, the smiles and frowns of it will be of a malignant tendency in this case. And above all your own corrupt hearts will be your most dangerous opposers. This made Paul complain, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." All these will work against you; so that in your Christian course, you will find yourselves obliged to work as the builders of the walls of Jerusalem did, with the trowel

in the one hand, and the sword in the other. So you have need to be strong. I now proceed,

II. To consider the direction, namely, that those who would be strong, *must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

Here I shall state and answer three questions.

Quest. 1st. What is the grace that is in Christ Jesus? It is twofold.

1. Relative grace, that is the free favour of God to poor sinners, by which they are embraced in the arms of his love unto salvation. "But we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they." This is only to be found in Christ, and no ways in our works and doings. He alone is the mercy-seat, where a guilty creature can meet with God comfortably. Every the least gracious smile given by a holy God, to any of fallen Adam's race, is and will be for ever through the wounds of a crucified Redeemer. And a guilty creature can never draw strength for obedience from an absolute God, a God out of Christ. But on the contrary a broad view of him as such, is enough to loose every joint of his soul and body, and leave him weak as water. But in Christ the believer has that grace, by which the curse is taken away, his person justified, and his works accepted. And this is a foundation upon which we may be strong. It is a spring of holy strength, resolution and courage.

2. Real grace, that is the fulness of the Spirit, and his graces, lodged in Jesus Christ, as the fountain and head of influences, from which they are to be derived, into all his members. "For it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. And out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." The unholy creature could never have had immediate access to God, no, not for sanctification. The curse lay upon him, which in point of justice, barred the emanation of sanctifying influences. But the fulness of the Spirit of holiness, the purchase of Christ's death and satisfaction, is lodged in Christ to be communicated; so the union between Christ and the soul, being once constituted, and the curse removed, the soul hath access to the continual supply of the Spirit of holiness. In Christ then there is a fulness of grace, of light, life, strength, and whatsoever is necessary to nourish the new creature, to carry it on to perfection, and continue it for ever in that perfection. So the believer has all in Christ, that is necessary, to carry on and complete his begun salvation, "and so is complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power."

Quest. 2nd. What is it to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus?

1. It is to be animated to duty by the faith of that grace that is in Christ Jesus for us, both relative and real. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us, in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." *The same mind*, that is the believing consideration of it. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The faith of strength and grace in Jesus Christ, by which we may be enabled to perform duty; and of favour and grace in him by which our work when done may be accepted, cannot fail of exciting and strengthening to duty, according to the measure of it, and of making men resolute and courageous in their Christian course. "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." And according as the faith of either of these do fail, the Christian's heart will faint and his hands hang down, as unfit for work.

2. It is to be strengthened to duty by supplies of grace, derived from Christ Jesus by faith. "He that eateth me, saith Jesus, even he shall live by me." And saith Paul, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." There is a real communication between a full Christ and an empty soul in the way of believing, by which the dark soul is enlightened, the weak strengthened, and the unholy sanctified; however mysterious it is to the world. Hence it is the saints have done such great things, and suffered such great things, and all through faith as the apostle shows, Heb. xi. Why is it that the goodness of many is like the morning cloud and the early dew, but that their pretended faith is like a pipe laid short of the fountain? The little water that is in it runs out, and there is no more comes in because it communicates not with the spring. And why are believers so often in a withered condition, but because they are not in the exercise of faith, the pipe is stopped.

Quest. 3d. Why must those that would be strong, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus?

1. Because all those that would be strong, must be strong as members of Christ, as branches of the vine. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." Now it is evident that the strongest limb will fail if the communication betwixt it and the head and heart do fail: and so will the branch wither, if the communication betwixt it and the stock be stopped.

2. Because the grace that is in Christ Jesus, is only sufficient to

bear us through. "My grace, says he is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." There is nothing in us to which we may safely trust, and place confidence upon it, either for justification or sanctification. "My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence, I shall not be moved." Hence the saints are described, "as being the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Use. 1. Of information. This shows us,

1. That such whose spirits are so softened with the love of their lusts, and world's ease, that they have no heart to face and combat the enemies of their souls, the devil, the world, and the flesh, will never get through safely to the other side. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Either you must be the ruin of your lusts, or they will be your ruin. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

2. That those who are strangers to the life of faith and the way of making use of Christ for sanctification, will never get through safely. Men may be at much pains this way, and go the round of external duties, and yet fall short of heaven at length. "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city." Some of these are filled with self-confidence, not doubting but that they are able to do the work in which they have engaged. Others are afraid that they will never get it done, but resolve to do as well as they can, and to look to Christ for pardon wherein they come short. But I would advise both as ever they would see heaven, to go out of themselves for all, and be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Use 2. Of exhortation. O Christians and communicants as ever ye would see heaven, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Strong and resolute against difficulties you must be, else you will never get there; and you can never be wrong indeed but in that grace.

Question. How may you be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, for the work of the Christian life, whether doing or suffering? Answer 1. You must be in Christ, in the first place by faith, accepting and embracing him, fleeing out of yourselves, confiding and trusting in him for all his salvation, on the gospel offer to you. The branch cannot partake of the sap of the stock till it be united with it. John xv. 1—6.

2. Be sure the work for which you would be strengthened be

called for by God at your hand. "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity." One's call to a work must first be cleared, before he can justly look to the Lord, to be with him in it. The communication of grace is not to be expected out of the way of duty.

3. When your duty is cleared be emptied of yourselves; and make nothing in you your confidence. Look upon yourselves as empty vessels that must be filled from heaven, else nothing to purpose can be done by them. Amen.

Ettrick, July 7, 1717.

MAN, SINFUL MAN IS A COMPLAINING CREATURE.

SERMON XXIII.

LAMENTATIONS iii. 39.

Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

THIS world is like an hospital, where every one is groaning under some uneasiness or other. It is so filled with complaints, that from the king to the beggar, nobody is free; the melancholy sound of them is to be heard in the lowest cottage, and the most stately palace is not free of them. Sin is that which brings on the ground of complaints and sin brings them out; and therefore religion checks them in the text. The prophet himself had been complaining in the former part of the chapter, he seemed to have represented God as unkind and severe. Here he checks himself, and chides himself for doing so, declaring that neither he nor others, had any good reason for any such fretting disposition. "Wherefore doth a living man complain," &c.

In these words it is supposed, that man is apt to complain under afflicting dispensations. It is expressed that he ought not to complain, but patiently to submit himself under the hand of God.

Observe here 1. The fault taxed, complaining, so the word is used of murmurers, Numb. xi. 1. "And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord." It denotes an action that passeth on a man's self, and intimates fretting, whereby one torments himself increasing his own grief and sorrow, for his affliction.

2. The unjustifiableness of this before the Lord, why doth a liv-

ing man complain? Or what doth he complain of? What can he say to justify his own uneasiness under the frowns of providence. Losers think they may have leave to speak; but religion teaches, rather to lay our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust before the Lord, who does us no wrong.

3. On what accounts it is unjustifiable, what are these things that may silence all our complaints? We are men that should act more rationally. We are living men that might therefore be in a worse condition. We are sinful men, whose hardships are the just punishment of our sins. We are men that have another thing to do. A man for his sin. So the Hebrew. Let each man complain for his sin. So the Dutch read it.

The words of the text are few but very comprehensive, I shall more accurately notice them, and glean a few things from them. I shall do this by raising and illustrating a series of observations founded upon the several parts of the text.

Observation I. There is a sinful complaining under crosses and afflictions. *Why doth a man complain?* It is true, God doth not absolutely require the afflicted to stop their mouths.

1. Let them complain of themselves, as the causes of their own woe. So they may do. "My soul, says Job, is weary of my life: I will leave my complaint upon myself." So men ought to do, for their own sins are the procuring causes of all the hardships with which they meet. "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee." And again, says the same prophet Jeremiah, "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you." The sinful nature, heart and life, are father, mother, and nurse, to all the miseries that come upon us. These are the carcase to which these eagles gather together. Remove that, and they would all quickly fly away. If the clouds return after the rain, let us blame our own misguidance.

2. Let them complain to God and welcome, Psal. cii. 1—11. When the waters of affliction gather in their breasts let them come to a gracious God, and open the sluice before him as Hannah did, who in the bitterness of her soul prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. He hath an ear ever ready to hear the complaints of his people, though men may be deaf to them. Each of them may say, *My God will hear me.* He hath also a heart to sympathize with them. "In all their affliction, he is afflicted." A hand to help them. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear." And indeed, here would be sufficient ease under all afflictions, if people had as much grace as to lay their complaints on themselves, and leave them

to God and before him. This would make all right, even where one's case is farthest wrong: thus Hannah disburdened herself, "And her countenance was no more sad." But pride of heart and unbelief binds the load on the complainer's own back.

But there are sinful complainings under afflictions.

1. We must not complain of God. It is dangerous to table a complaint against the sovereign Ruler of the world, whose sovereignty may silence us, and whose infinite purity and holiness may satisfy us, that he does us no wrong. When the creature libels his Creator who shall sit to judge betwixt them? To whose tribunal is he answerable, who does in heaven and earth according to his own will?

2. We must not complain of our lot, or murmur because better has not fallen to our share. They who do this, "are murmurers and complainers, walking after their own lusts." He that blames his lot reproaches him that allowed it to him. Every one ought to think. All men sit at God's table, and God himself carves every one's part to him. A holy wise providence doth this, and to complain of the dispensation is sinful and hazardous, as reflecting on the wisdom and holiness of the sovereign manager.

3. We must not arrest our complaining eye on the unjust instruments of our afflictions, like the dog snarling at the stone, but looking not to the hand that casts it. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" This is to make a god of the creature and then to rise up against it. David was aware of this, and kept from splitting on this rock in his affliction. "And the king said, what have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David, who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? The sick man if he be wise, will neither blame the physician nor the lancet for his pain; knowing that his disease is the procuring cause, though they be instrumental causes of it. To clear this farther, men's complaints under affliction are sinful,

1. When they are accompanied with any the least rising of the heart against God, or his holy providence. Discontentment and dissatisfaction with what providence has laid to our hands, is contrary to faith which says, he doth all things well; and to holiness which teaches a perfect resignation to the divine will and pleasure, saying, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

2. Much more are complaints sinful, when they are mingled with hard speeches against God and providence. These, says Jude, "are hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against God." These are open reflections on God, striking against his honour.

When the hearts even of the saints are disturbed under pressing afflictions, it is hard to get such a clear fire from them, that will be free of this smoke. "Thou art become cruel unto me, says Job, with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me." Hence they often choose to say nothing, for fear of speaking amiss. Thus Aaron in an awful moment, *Held his peace.* Or they chose to assert in the first place the righteousness of God, saying, "Righteous art thou O Lord, when I plead with thee."

3. When the complaining humour raises such a fog and mist as hides their mercies from their sight. Thus it did with Rachel, "She envied her sister, and said unto Jacob, give me children, or else I die." No wonder it did so with Haman, Esther v. 13. It was this the prophet was aware of in his complaints; when he said "Thy mercies are new every morning, and great is thy faithfulness." When the voice of men's complaints rises so high, as to drown the voice of their praises they are certainly sinful. For let men be low as they will in this world, their praises for mercies should have the ascendant of their complaints. For we are, "In every thing to give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

4. When it so discomposeth as to unfit a person for the work of his ordinary calling. That holds good in many respects. "For the sorrow of the world worketh death." The scripture makes a very honourable mention of Abraham's applying himself to his necessary business, when he was under the heavy affliction of his wife's death, Gen. xxiii. 3—18. And when trouble does so discompose men's minds, as they cannot manage their necessary affairs, it is an evidence that it is wrong.

Lastly, It is sinful, especially when it unfits men for the work of their Christian calling, and the service of God. "I am so troubled, says the Psalmist, that I cannot speak. I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed." Afflictions are in that respect, like the wind to a ship at sea; if the wind be kept in measure, it causes the ship to sail swift, but if it rise boisterous, it is ready to overwhelm the vessel. If afflictions be well managed, they quicken men to the service of God; but if the spirit be overwhelmed by them, they quite unfit for the service, either causing it to cease, or to drive on heavily in it. Thus Aaron said, "such things have befallen me; and if I had eaten the sin offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord. The Israelites also are said to have covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and crying out, insomuch that he regarded not the offering any more, or received it with good-will at their hand."

Observation II. Sinful complaining is self-tormenting. The word

signifies, to make one's self sad, to vex, fret, and disturb himself. God makes him sad by his providence, and he makes himself sadder by his impatience and distrust. Sinful complaining is a thankless office. It is so,

1. To God whose Spirit is grieved with it, and provoked to anger by it. "And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled: and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost part of the camp." For it is quite contrary to the great duty of faith in God, which leads to the soul's resting in God. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

2. To others, as marring the harmony of society, and often when people give way to that black passion, God in his just judgment inhibits others, that they have no power to help the complainer. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness."

3. To a person's self it is disagreeable and tormenting. It is a breach of the sixth commandment, a sin against one's own life, destructive to the body, "A broken spirit drieth the bones. And to the soul also, for by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." It is agreeable to none but Satan, who was a murderer from the beginning; who being a malcontent against the government of heaven, strives to increase that disposition in the world, and uses the fretful and complaining passions in a person's own heart; as a sword to pierce himself. The sinful complainer puts a load above his own burden. For if one's will were submitted to the will of God, how easy would it be to bear afflictions; but when the proud heart cannot stoop, the apprehension magnifies the cross, and of a molehill makes a mountain.

Observation III. Man, sinful man, is a complaining creature. Why doth he complain? It supposes he does so. Sinful complaining much abounds in the world. There is no reason can be given to justify it, but there are several reasons or causes of the unreasonable practice.

1. Men do not entertain due thoughts of the sovereignty of God, and his awful majesty, Matth. xx. 11—15. God's sovereignty would, if duly seen and considered, quell the mutiny of unruly passions, that rise within men's breasts, and arraign the great ruler of the world at their bar, for mismanagement. We are absolutely his and he may dispose of us as he will, and all that is ours, and we are obliged to obey him without disputing, and to submit without quarrelling.

2. Men often see not the designs of holy providence, and they are

apt to suspect the worst, for guilt is a nurse and mother of fears. Providence is a mystery, the design of which is sometimes not easily discovered. "Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." And many times when the Lord is working for men's good, they strongly suspect an evil designed against them, as Jacob did, *All these things*, said he, *are against me.* Hence they complain of their crosses, as if they were curses; and of what providence designs for their good, as if it were for their destruction.

3. Pride of heart is the cause of sinful complaining. Men are naturally like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. But a soul truly humbled will not dare to quarrel with God, but will rather say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." When David was in his haste he was ready to complain of every one, of the prophet Nathan among others, and of God under that covert. "I said in my haste all men are liars." But when his soul was humbled in him, he lays his hand on his mouth and lies down at God's feet, saying, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty. My soul is even as a weaned child." An unsubdued spirit under a cross makes a heavy burden.

4. Unmortified lust, when crossed with afflictions makes a fearful mutiny. Rachel's heart was too much set upon the comfort of children, and providence disappointing her desire, she complains heavily, Gen. xxx. 1. Jonah with his gourd, chap. iv. 6—9. If men were not too much addicted to the creature, too closely wedded to the things of time, they would not raise such complaints on the loss of them. Our over much fondness of the world's smiles, make the frowns of it so hard to bear. If our hearts were loosed from the world, we would care the less whether it smiled or frowned. We would have a holy indifference both of its good and evil. Grasp hard a man's hand that hath a sore finger, he presently cries out; but if his hand was whole, he would take it kindly.

5. Want of a due sense of the evil of sin and of our unworthiness on that account. They that see their sins and have a heart to mourn for them, will not see occasion to complain of what they are under, but rather wonder that their burden is not made heavier, Lam. iii. 22. And a stroke of the Spirit of grace, at the rocky heart to cause the waters of godly sorrow gush out, would finish sinful complaints; the stream of dissatisfaction and sorrow would be turned another way.

6. Overlooking our mercies. Did men consider what mercies compass them about in their lowest condition in this world; and how

all these are forfeited by sin, and yet continued by grace and free favour, they would not complain. But when men hide their eyes from seeing the many obligations they stand under to kind providence, and count all nothing that is left them, no wonder they be so unreasonable as to complain.

7. Dwelling and poring upon crosses and difficulties. This is just taking an unbelieving lift of our own burden, which will certainly increase it. Jacob would not call his son Ben-oni, though Rachel desired it. An unmortified fancy is a heavy plague, which cleaves to an affliction as the fire does on tinder, and will not suffer it to go out of itself.

Lastly, Unbelief is the great cause of all. It was the generation that believed not that murmured in the wilderness. Faith brings the soul to rest in God in all conditions. It satisfies the soul with a full Christ in the want of all things, Habak. iii. 17—19. It realizes the things of another world, and where they have their due weight, truly the value of the things of time will sink very low. Upon the other hand unbelief turns the soul out of its rest in God, unto the creature where it must needs be restless, and blocking up the soul's sight of better things, it magnifies both the good and evil of a present world.

Observation IV. Because we are men we ought not to complain. Why doth a man complain?

1. We are men and not brutes. We are endowed with rational faculties, by which we may take up such considerations, from the sovereignty of God and the demerit of our sins, that might silence our complaints. The brutes bear a part of the load laid on the world for sin, and they groan under it, Rom. viii. 22. They complain as they are capable, and no wonder, for they know not who has laid the burden on them, nor for what it is laid on, nor whether it will be taken off. But we are men that may know all these, and why should we complain.

2. We are men and not Gods, creatures and not Creators, subjects and not lords, and therefore ought to submit and not to complain. "Let the potsherds of the earth strive with one another, but will man strive with God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Will weak man enter the lists with omnipotence? Will we live in God's world and not submit to his government? Is it fit that man should be independent and carve out his lot for himself? "Should it be according to thy mind? He will recompense it whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose." Shall the night owl pick a quarrel with the sun, because it cannot bear its light? And will blind man pick a quar-

rel with holy wise providence, because it does not in every point answer his foolish desires?

3. We are men and not angels. We are not inhabitants of the upper regions, where no storms blow, where there is an eternal spring and uninterrupted peace. But we dwell in the lower region where no such thing is to be expected, but the clouds will return after the rain. Can we think that the rocks must be removed for us, that God's unchangeable purpose in the management of the world must be changed for us? If we are men, we must not complain, that what is common to men, the greatest of men, the best of men, befalls us.

3. We are men and not devils. We, at our worst, in this world, are not in that desperate, hopeless, and helpless state in which they are. But have something to comfort us which they have not. They have no Saviour, "For Christ verily took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham." They fell into an abyss of misery in which they are sinking to this day, and ever will sink; but no hand was ever stretched out to help them. We also fell into an abyss of misery by sin, and while we are wet with the least part of it, our Lord stretches out his hand to pull us out. And shall we complain that we feel some of this misery, and not rather praise, that help is offered to pull us out of it, and restore us to happiness?

Observation V. Because we are living men we ought not to complain. "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" The force of this lies here.

1. Our life is forfeited yet continued, therefore there is no reason to complain. Life is forfeited by sin, which was forbidden unto man under the pain of death. We have sinned, and therefore incurred the penalty. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," And why should living Adam (as it is in the Hebrew) complain, who deserving death is but banished or deprived of his wealth? Such an one has reason rather to commend the clemency, than to inveigh against the severity of his prince. Are we deprived of some comforts of life, we might have been deprived of life itself? Are we cast into a cloud of cares and perplexities, we might have been buried in a grave?

2. Living, we are not in hell, and therefore should we praise and not complain, Lam. iii. 22. Would people in their afflictions look to the state of the damned, the smoke of whose torment ascends for ever and ever, and withal remember that God in justice, might have had them in that state by this time, they would lay their hands on their mouths and not complain of what they meet with in the land of

the living. How willingly would such exchange their lot with the most afflicted in the land of the living, "For the spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear."

3. Living, we have the means of grace and hopes of glory. So we have access to better our estate in the other world, if it should never be better in this. Living, time is given to us for working. Life is the day, "the night cometh when no man can work. Whatsoever then thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." If we work out our salvation in this time, our happiness shall be such after death, as all our afflictions shall never be remembered any more. And the more afflicted our lot in the world is, it may the more stir us up to mind our great work.

4. Living, it may be worse with us ere we go out of the world than it is, if we do complain. The heaviest case in which one is here, he may still bless God, that it is not worse. It is easy for infinite power to punish us still seven times more, and to heat the furnace of our affliction hotter and hotter, Lev. xxvi. It were good for the afflicted, that they would often think how the Lord can, and justly may, make their case worse. This would cause them lay their hands upon their mouths.

5. Living, we may live to see our case better. While there is life there is hope, "Why then should a living man complain?" We have to do with a bountiful God. "He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever." They have been very low who have been raised up, and they have been wrapt up in a thick cloud, who yet have had a fair sunshine after. The rains do not fall, nor the winds blow always. The wheel of providence hath four sides, and can in a moment take a quite contrary course to that which it now keeps. If our troubles be from the immediate hand of God. "Then though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." If they are from the hand of others, their heart is in his hand, and that which is crooked will be made straight, when God will, though not when we will.

6. We have no surer hold of our life than of the comforts of life. The latter are uncertain, so is the former. Our comforts are slippery, our life frail, and liable to a great many more accidents than our comforts of life, for the most part are. Is our life then preserved, while some of our comforts are lost, let us praise the preserver of men and not complain. The stroke that takes away a comfort might have taken away our life.

7. When other comforts are lost, and our life is continued, that which is best is preserved to us. Life is better than the outward

comforts of life. "For the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment. But the favour of God is better than life." If then a man were stript of all his enjoyments, health, wealth, ease, and every thing, yet while he is living he may recover the lost favour of God; but there is no recovering of it when life is gone, as the tree falls it lies. And were this only considered, one single breathing would be more valuable to us, than all we have in the world.

Lastly, The time of life is the time for all men's praising, because they sit all at the common table of mercy, and therefore not for complaining. "The living, he shall praise thee." They that will not rest on the will of God, will get a long eternity to complain in, but here it is both their sin and misery. I know the doctrine would bear us in hand, that there should be no sin in hell after the last judgment, and then the damned will not be capable of the least thought materially evil. But the scripture tells us, "The wicked are driven away in their wickedness;" and they are so far from being cured there, that they are filled with blasphemies. While they weep, wail, and gnash their teeth, will there not be the least fretful thought against God? They are not sanctified there, their natural corruption remains, and will it never in the least set up its head? But will they love a tormenting God with all their heart? Will they be perfectly contented with their lot? This the eternal law of righteousness requires of the creature, as a creature, and therefore in every state, if they do it not they sin. Because we are living then let us praise, and not complain, lest we complain for ever.

Observation VI. We are sinful men justly punished for our sin, and therefore ought not to complain. *A man for the punishment of his sins?* Consider here,

1. Our sins are the procuring causes of all afflictions. "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee." We may thank ourselves for all our crosses, and therefore complain of ourselves, each saying with Job, "I will leave my complaint upon myself:" but will not complain of God; *for he doth not afflict willingly.* Affliction rises not out of the dust, but out of a sinful nature, heart, and life. God hath joined together the evil of sin, and the evil of punishment, hence drawing the first link of this chain, we draw the other also on ourselves, why then do we complain?

2. When our afflictions are at the highest pitch in this world, yet they are not so great as our sins deserve. "After all, says Ezra, that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve. And says David, He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." How many of our sins

does the Lord mercifully overlook, not smiting every time we sin against him, but he is long-suffering, and when he does, he debates with us in measure, otherwise we should have judgment without mercy. What face then can we have to complain after all this? We sin with a high hand, and the Lord smites softly, and yet we cry out as if we were wronged, and treated cruelly.

3. We receive much undeserved good, while at the worst we get but our deserved evil. Our cup is a mixture of sweet with bitter; while the bitterest cup is put in our hand, let us then rather praise him for the undeserved sweet, than complain for the deserved bitterness that is in it, saying with Job, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil." It is an evidence of an embittered spirit to overlook our mercies, and pore upon our crosses, to deny unto our bountiful God the due praise of his free favours, because he visits us with some crosses.

4. Our afflictions are necessary for us, wherefore do we complain, Lam. iii. 33. Our necessities extort them out of God's hand, for he has no pleasure otherwise in the miseries of his creatures. "Have I any pleasure at all, says he, that the wicked should die? And not that he should return from his ways and live?" A child left to himself and a person undisciplined by crosses will go all wrong. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." If we could attain it, we would take a bed, in which no thorn of uneasiness would be found; but if it were so, we would sleep too sound. Our hearts are hard to wean from a frowning world, how would we do if it were smiling on every hand. Nay, there are many mercies in thy lot, there must be a mixture of crosses in it, something crooked, something wanting, to be a corrective. Why then should we be so angry with our blessings?

5. We might get out from under them, if we would speedily answer the design of them, Lev. xxvi. 41, 42. They are God's medicines which if we would suffer to work kindly, we should soon recover. If people would answer the design of afflicting dispensations, the Lord would remove them, he would cast away the rod, when there were no more use for it to the child. But continuing stupid and impenitent under our crosses, we wreath the yoke about our own neck faster.

6. How often is the sin visibly written on the punishment, that men may clearly see the cause of God's contending, and lay their mouths in the dust. It is a silencing consideration. "As I have done, so God hath requited me." How often are we scorched with a fire of our own kindling, yea, we nurse the viper that gnaws out our bowels, and our cross is the native fruit of our own conduct.

Observation VII. Under our afflictions we should turn our complaints on our sins. *A man for his sins.*

We have sins of nature, heart, and life. We have many things wrong in our way, something that is in a special manner the cause of the controversy, that brings on the stroke. Let us turn the stream of our complaints that way.

1. Instead of complaining of God, let us complain of ourselves to God, instead of taxing a holy God with severity, let us charge ourselves with folly before him. "So foolish was I and ignorant, says Asaph, I was as a beast before thee. My wounds stink and are corrupt, says David, because of my foolishness." If we begin to find fault with the work of providence, we will instantly go wrong, and think and speak what we ought not; but our own sinful ways and doings, we shall be in no hazard readily of making them blacker than they are.

2. Instead of the heart's bleeding for trouble, let our hearts bleed for sin. David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people, and he confessed his great sin in doing it. By trouble we are offended and our peace is broken; by sin God is offended, and his Spirit grieved. And his pleasure is to be preferred to our ease, and therefore the main stream of our sorrow should run on sin, not on affliction, which should but open the heart to bleed for sin.

3. Instead of tossing our cross in our minds to fret ourselves, let us toss our sin there to humble ourselves. O! what thoughts are unprofitably bestowed on our afflictions, that might be well spent in seeking out the cause of the Lord's controversy, in loathing ourselves for it, applying to the blood of Christ for pardon of the sins that are at the root of our trouble.

4. Instead of labouring to get up our lot to our mind, let us labour to get our minds brought down to our lot. Let us lay the axe of mortification to the root of these lusts that keep up our minds above our lot. This was the lesson Paul had learned, though it is not easy. "I have learned, says he, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." There is a crook in every man's lot, which he cannot make straight, and something wanting which he cannot supply. The best way is to bow the mind to the crook, and learn to want that of which providence sees fit to refuse the supply. Let us set ourselves to this way of managing crosses.

1. It will stop the running issue of sinful complaining. When one bleeds excessively at one part of the body, they use to open a vein in another part, to turn the stream from that part and so to stop it there. And they that are upon the fret, and carried away in the complaining humour for their crosses, cannot in that case meet

with a greater mercy, than to have the heart vein opened to bleed for sin. They will find the other will stop presently.

2. Repenting under a rod is profitable, but repining is hurtful. Suppose repentance have a bitterness with it, yet since we must be in bitterness, better repent than repine. If we feel the prickles of the rose bush, yet there is something pleasant and profitable to be gathered of it. But to be scratched with briers, the scratching is all, there is nothing worth the pains growing upon them. Repentance has joy included in it, but repining all over has nothing desirable.

3. This is the way to get good of crosses. To get meat of the eater, and sweet out of the strong; to make spiritual advantage by temporal losses. Hereby every wound we get in an evil world, might be a wound to our lusts, and so bring health to our souls. Every stone thrown at us by any hand might turn to better account than a precious stone. And by these cross winds we might be driven to our harbour.

4. This is the readiest way to get free of our crosses. When a man is brought to this he is prepared for a deliverance. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." When men's complaints are turned this way, and people are more careful to get free of sin than of trouble, that is a special time for a gracious God's lifting off his hand, who will never lay on man more than is meet.

5. The neglect of this leads into many snares. He that gets not his heart to submit to his affliction, either will continue his complaints, and so be a tormentor to himself, or otherwise will be in hazard of using unlawful endeavours for freeing himself from it. Hence when this sits down upon one's spirit, and they go not to God with it, they are ready to go to carnal company for their ease, to sensual pleasures, which is called diverting, but is really destructive to their souls.

I come now to the application of the whole, and let me address you in the words of the text, "Why do we being living men complain, men for the punishment of our sins?" Since we are men, living men, justly punished for our sins when we are afflicted, why do we sinfully complain? Why do we not rather turn our complaints on sin, and repent and not repine? Is there any reason to justify sinful complaining and murmuring under afflicting dispensations. The complaining humour wants not its pretences; but let us examine them.

1. There is no sorrow like my sorrow, says the complainer, no person afflicted at the rate I am. Answer. Every one feels what he

himself endures, but is no competent judge of the sorrows of others to which he is a stranger. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." The world affords many miserable objects, who with heart and good-will would exchange lots with any of us all; and God is no more obliged to be kind to us than to them. And no doubt, were our crosses and those of many others in the world laid down together to be exchanged, we would readily take up our own again, for fear of a worse. But suppose there were none like them in the world; yet thou art a living man, and since thou art so, and not in hell, thou hast no reason to complain, since thou mightest justly have been in that hopeless condition in which thou art not. And if thou canst see no sorrow on the earth like thine, look into the state of the damned and thou wilt see worse, which may put you to silence.

But again, if thou wert duly sensible of thy sin, thou wouldest say, There is no sin like mine; thou like Paul wouldest reckon thyself the chief of sinners: thou mayest see more ill in thyself than in others; and therefore shouldest not complain, though no sorrow were like thine, because thou wouldest look upon it as the just punishment of thy sin.

2. But yet my trouble is very extraordinary, few have met with such a one. Answer. Job's trouble was extraordinary, and he was reproached with that, "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee: and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" Yet he bore them very patiently, and when he was out of the hurry of temptation, saw no reason to complain of holy providence, Job ii. 10. Our acquaintance with the world is very narrow, and no doubt it has been the case of many, what we think has been the case of very few. But though many have no acquaintance with our cross, yet we deserve all we meet with, and that should silence us; and though others may deserve it too, yet, shall our eye be evil, because the eye of the sovereign Ruler of the world is good. Besides these others may have their crosses, which we are as little acquainted with, as they are with ours.

I could bear any cross better than that which providence has laid upon me. Answer. That is but the product of a deceitful heart, which still thwarting with the divine will, prefers any thing to the present duty. We are in that case like one in sore sickness, who shifts from place to place, still thinking he would be better in another place than where he is, but when he tries it he obtains no relief and so returns to his bed again. But what if it be so that thou couldest bear any trial better than the one thou art under. Truly if there be one thing lacking in thee, thou mayest be sure

God will try thee in that point to discover thee to thyself, if thou wilt at all see thy own case; and *what one thing thou lackest.* The hardest cross for a man to bear, is that which strikes against a man's predominant affection or lust. And that which thou findest to be the affliction thou canst least bear, may serve to discover where thy weak side lies. And in the trials made upon, consists the greatest trial of one's sincerity. "I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity."

4. Others triumph over me, and make my trouble the matter of my reproach. Answer. This has been the case of the best of the saints. See how it was with Job, xxx. 9—14. and David, Psal. iii. 2. as a true type of Christ, Psal. lxix. 12. And did not the Jews mock, scoff, and deride Christ himself in his bitter sufferings? But though they complained to God, yet not of God for it. Truly those that do so add affliction to the afflicted, and speak to the grief of those whom the Lord hath wounded, have the worst of it themselves. "Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker; and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished." And such treatment may well further thy deliverance, it shall not retard it, if thou conductest thyself rightly under it, Zech. i. 15, 16.

5. My trouble has been of a long continuance, I have looked for a deliverance, but it hath not come. Answer. This hath often been the case of the Lord's people, Jer. viii. 15—23. But they may blame themselves when it is so. *For the Lord afflicteth not willingly.* Surely there is a cause. Hast not thou put a stop to thy own deliverance? Perhaps thou art not prepared for it yet. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Thou hast not got thy heart brought to an entire submission. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." None blame the husbandman, because he sows not his seed, before the ground, by plowing, be fitted to receive it; and do not thou blame providence for suspending thy deliverance till thy heart be humbled, thy complaints be silenced, and thou be as a weaned child.

6. My case seems to be hopeless and alway the longer the more hopeless. Answer. If thou cannot believe, and resign thyself entirely to the Lord, without complaining, it seems thy deliverance is near, because man's extremity is God's opportunity. "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." Either thou shalt be delivered from the trouble, as Abraham on the mount, or the people at the red sea; or the disciples in the ship, when the wind ceased in a moment. Or delivered in

trouble, from the evil and sting of it, getting strength to bear it, and sufficient comfort under it. "My grace is sufficient for thee, says God, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Say thou then with Paul, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." For our gracious God loves to work for his people's help, when they are in the most helpless condition.

7. My life is one continued train of troubles, and I am every day meeting with new ones. Answer. So it has been with the best of God's children, Job says "My sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters." Asaph says, "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Our Lord himself was a man of sorrows. And he hath fairly warned us of this, that we must take up our cross daily. And since every day hath the sin thereof, what wonder that it have also the evil thereof, Where is the ground to complain here? The root of sin is firmly fixed in us, and there is need of much tossing to loose it. We have much dross and it requires our being frequently in the furnace. If it be the will of God that you have more frequent troubles than others, there is ground to stoop to sovereignty, that takes not one method with all, but no ground to complain.

8. I suffer wrongfully even from those, at whose hands I deserved it not. Answer. Sin hath put the world into confusion, and having set men against God, hath set them also against one another. We have contributed to this disorder, and must not complain that we share the bitter effects of it. We have grieved God's Spirit who never did us any wrong, and that should silence us, when others mete that measure to us, which we have meted to our gracious God. All our fellow creatures are in the Lord's hand, and they can be no more comfortable to us than he makes them to be; neither can they be more heavy upon us, than he permits them for our trial and correction; and therefore we should look up to heaven in this case and forbear to complain. Thus David said of Shimei, so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David. Who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so?

Lastly, My trouble is in itself exceeding great, I know not how to bear it. Answer. As great as it is, it may be greater, since thou art a living man. As great as it is, it is less than thine iniquity deserves. Were thy trouble and thy sin weighed in an even balance, the latter would weigh down the former. Why then should a living man complain, for such a punishment of his sin? The more resigned thou art to the will of God, thou wilt bear it the better for the complaining disposition, may well make thy trouble

heavier, it will make it no lighter. And so we should conclude, that there is no solid reason why man should complain.

Consider the evil of this sinful complaining, and murmuring, and impatience under afflicting dispensations.

1. It is rebellion against the will of God. To the murmuring Israelites, Moses says, *Hear ye rebels.* God governs the world, and shall we malcontents, that are not pleased with his government, rise in mutiny against it? What pleaseth God, shall it displease us? And what is right in his eyes, shall it be evil in ours? Will nothing please us but to have the reins of government out of his hands into our own? "Should it be according to thy mind? He will recompense it, whether thou refuse or whether thou choose, and not I." If our passion did not blind us, we might see how we would quickly fire the little world of our own and others' condition, if the reins were in our own hands.

2. It is a killing sorrow to one's self. "The sorrow of the world worketh death." It melts one's heart within him, and like a vulture preys upon his natural spirits to shorten his days. God crosseth the complainer's will, and therefore he pierceth himself through with many sorrows; as if a man should wrap up himself in darkness because he cannot stop the course of the sun.

3. It is a fretting anger against one's lot. "Murmurers and complainers walk after their own lusts." Complainers, such as are dissatisfied with their lot, and with the distributions of providence, complain of the least, and worse falls to their share. They bark at the mountains of brass, the immoveable purposes of God, as dogs at the moon and with equal success. They disquiet and vex themselves in vain, like men dashing their heads against a rock, which still stands unmoved, but their heads are wounded. They are like a wild bull in a net, the more he stirs, the faster he is caught; so that still the complainers return with loss.

4. It is a charging God foolishly. This Job did not. It is an impious libelling and accusing the administration of the sovereign Ruler of the world, and that of folly, as if he were not wise enough to govern the world. The complainer seems to see many flaws in the conduct of providence, and pretends to tell how God's work might be corrected. It accuses him also of injustice, as if he did us wrong in afflicting us, or laid on us more than is meet. The Judge of all the earth cannot be biassed nor bribed, yet the sinful complainer charges him as an acceptor of persons and a rigid governor.

5. It robs God of his due praise for the manifold mercies in our lot. Place a sinful complainer in a paradise, the fruit of that one tree which is forbidden him, and about which he is uneasy, will so

embitter him, that he will not give God thanks for the variety of mercies, with which he is otherwise privileged. For all avail him nothing while his will is disappointed in that. With Haman he saith, *all this availeth me nothing.* He dwells so much on his complaints, that he will not and cannot value his comforts.

Directions for quelling the complaining humour.

1. Labour by faith to take up your soul's everlasting rest in God through Christ. The wise merchant is content to sit down with the loss of all, when he finds the one pearl of great price, but not till then. The heart of man must have something on which to rest. When he goes to rest in the creature, he finds the bed shorter than he can stretch himself upon it. Crosses and afflictions prevent his rest there. Should he then give up with the creature and take God in Christ for his God, his all and instead of all, then shall he find what would give ease under all disquietments in the world. Amidst all external calamities, he could then with Habbakuk, rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.

2. Consider the sovereign authority and infinite wisdom of God. He created us and may he not do with his own what he pleaseth. Shall we go about to wrest the uncontroulable sceptre out of his hand? Shall not his sovereign dominion over us command our submission and absolute resignation? His sovereignty who giveth not an account of any of his ways may silence us. His infinite wisdom may satisfy us. There is no chance work in the world, not one stroke at random in all thy condition; it is not a work huddled up in a haste. The wheel of providence is full of eyes. Every thing in thy condition was from eternity in the womb of the wise decree, and brought upon thee accordingly. "For God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

3. Consider that the crosses with which you meet are necessary for you. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. If thou mightest want them, thou wouldst not have them; for God takes no pleasure merely in giving his creatures pain. But he corrects us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. If thou be under great afflictions, know that strong diseases must have strong remedies. Blame not the physician for it, but the disease. If God withdraw a comfort from thee, it is to starve a lust that would feed on it. If he lay on thee what thou wouldst not, it is but to bear down a lust that would carry thee headlong.

4. Believe there is nothing in this world, in which either your happiness or misery is bound up. The world's happiness or misery is but a shadow of these things. That only is true happiness in which a person wants nothing he can desire, and this is only to be

obtained in the enjoyment of God; and that is real misery in which a person has nothing left to comfort him, and this is not but in being utterly rejected by God.

5. Labour to be humble. Humility lets us see our true worth that it is nothing, and so fences us against complaining, Gen. xxxii. 10. It makes a person wonder that he hath any comfort at all left him; and so lets him into the mystery of, *in every thing to give thanks.*

6. Do not dwell and pore upon your crosses, for that feeds the complaining humour. Turn your eyes on your mercies left you, and be thankful for them.

7. Learn to unbosom yourself in all your griefs unto the Lord by prayer and supplication. This gave Hannah a happy ease. And go to your Bibles and get your souls refreshed with the good news from the far country, Psal. cxix. 92.

8. Exercise yourself always in some honest business. In those that are idle, Satan is busy to foster the complaining humour.

9. Resist this humour in its beginnings.

Lastly, Live by faith. By this your souls will be stayed on the promises; in all events have a favourable view of the design of God in afflictions, and fix on the things that are not seen, as the object of your chief care, and the great spring of your comfort. Amen.

Ettrick, August, 1717.

THE PLEASURES OF REAL RELIGION.

SERMON XXIV.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

THE Hebrew name of this book imports sentences well pressed together, and powerful to command our assent and regulate our conduct. In this context wisdom, or real religion is commended in the 16th verse from what she hath. They get much with her who get her. She brings to them in both hands. In the text she is commended for her discipline, the way and manner of life to which she directs her votaries. This is that which chiefly prejudices the men of the world against her, so that they cannot think to live with her. It is represented here in these two, her ways and her paths. *Her*

ways, that is the ways in which she directs us to walk through the world. She has ways of her own that are not the ways of the world, but ways peculiar to herself, that are chalked out by the holy commands of God. It is called the way of faith and holiness.

Her paths, that is her strait ways, as the word signifies. Amongst her ways there are some very strait ones, and these are most frightful to the world. They are so strait, that they cannot endure them. But they are mistaken. Behold the commendation of them, in two points. First, they are sweet, *they are ways of pleasantness*. They are like pleasant walks, which invite men to walk in them, by the pleasures that are about them, with the trees, flowers, and other things which surround them. Such a pleasantness the word imports, ver. 18. "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her. Issachar saw that rest was good, and the land pleasant." They are so far from being unpleasant and melancholy, that they are ways of pleasantness, very pleasant. They are, secondly, safe. Many ways are sweet that are not safe; pleasant that are not profitable; but both sweetly centre here. *Her paths are peace*, that is, they are paths of peace. There is no danger in them, nothing to annoy the traveller, while he but keeps straight forward. They are peace itself, most peaceful. That is, all prosperity attends them, and so some versions read it, for so the Hebrew expresseth all prosperity and welfare.

Next observe the extent of the commendation. *All her paths are peace.* Even those of them that seem most rugged and unpleasant are peace. There are both pleasure and profit wrapped up in them. There is no contrariety amongst them. One does not embitter another, as it is in the ways of the world. The pleasures of religion are full of peace.

Doctrine I. The way of religion is the way of wisdom. They that are truly religious are wise, and the following of religion is the wisest course in the world. Here I shall,

I. Present to you some of the scriptural characters of the way of religion.

II. I shall show that this way of religion, is the way of wisdom. I am then,

I. To present to you some of the scriptural characters of the way of religion,

1. The way of religion is the way of truth. The apostle Peter expressly calls it *the way of truth*. The faith of principles is a part of religion as well as the practice of holiness. And therefore faith is called wisdom, Eph. i. 8. The God of truth has revealed truth to us in the scriptures of truth, and requires us to believe it. And

the way of error is contrary to the way of religion, and is the product of the blindness of men's minds. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." This error proceeds also from their corrupt affections and can never be sanctified by all the plausible pretences with which it is set off. "Will ye speak wickedly for God? And talk deceitfully for him?" A wrong head may lead people out of the way of religion as well as a wrong heart.

2. The way of God's commandments. "I will run, says David, the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart." In this way then the soul labours to do what God requires, and to abstain from what he hath forbidden. So men are out of the way in transgressing these commands, doing what God forbids, and omitting what he requires. Nothing belongs to the way of religion, which is not hedged in by the commands of God on every side. What men offer to God as duty which he has not commanded, and what they account sin, which his law makes not so, is but superstition, and not in religion; and in this men are apt to abound when religion falls into decay among them, as appears in all formalists.

3. The way of faith and not of sense. *We walk by faith and not by sight.* Religion sets a man chiefly in pursuit of unseen things. The cry of the world is *who will shew us any good.* But religion leads a person to make choice of an unseen Christ for his portion, unseen hopes, joys of pleasures, yea, "to look to all the things which are not seen, and which are eternal." Others value themselves on what they have in hand; they on what they have in hope. The way of religion is the way of trust and dependence for all on God in Christ, for light, life and strength. "They live by the faith of the Son of God." They go out of this way, who trust in themselves and live upon their own stock.

4. The way of holiness. "It shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Religion teaches holiness, in heart and life, piety towards God, and righteousness towards men. It allows no sin, however small the world accounts it to be. Nay the very appearance of evil, religion teaches to eschew. It gives one holy rule, by which to regulate heart, lip, and life, the conversation at home and abroad, in public before the world, and in secret before God alone, in our personal and relative conversation.

5. The way of irreconcilable opposition to the devil, the world, and the flesh. And therefore the Christian life is called a warfare. The way of worldly ease, to row with the stream is not the way of

religion. They who enter upon religion, must encounter the powers of hell, and as it is Satan's business to tempt, it is theirs to resist and wrestle against him. They commence nonconformists to the world. For the command is, *be not conformed to this world.* They make a practical separation from the world lying in wickedness, holding quite a contrary course to that, which the gale of the world's example would drive them. "The Lord preserves them from this generation for ever." They deny the cravings and lusts of the flesh, "with all ungodliness, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." They strive to mortify irregular passions and affections. "For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."

6. The way of spiritual worship. "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit." In this a man aims at inward obedience, consecrating his heart as a temple to the Lord, in which to offer the spiritual sacrifices of faith, fear, love, thankfulness and other parts of unseen religion. They who take up with the form of religion and mere external duties are out of the way. "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." True religion teaches to give spiritual service to God, because he is a Spirit; and to join the power of godliness with the form of it.

7. The strait and narrow way. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find, and walk in it." The multitude chooseth the broad way of sin, in which they find room for their beloved lusts, and walk at all adventures without a certain rule, but as their corrupt inclinations draw them. There is no such room in the way of religion. They must deny themselves the latitude of thoughts, words, and actions, that others freely take to themselves, endeavouring in all things to think, speak, and act by rule, the rule of the holy law.

8. The way of universal obedience. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments." The first step which a person takes in that way, the soul says, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* They dare not wilfully neglect any of God's commandments. Some persons neglect the duties of piety towards God, and deal fairly with their neighbours. Some take an opposite course. They pretend to piety and neglect morality. Some fix on the substantial duties, with a slighting of circumstantials; others are so taken up with the circumstantials, that they justle out the weighty matters of the law, but the way of real religion joins both. For while it requires the weighty matters of the *law, judgment, mercy, and faith to be done,* it enjoins also *not to leave the other undone.*

Lastly, The good old way. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in

the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." If you have a mind to walk heavenward, you must go by the footsteps of the flock. The way which the saints have trodden, in the several ages of the church. It is the way in which we will see the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us. We are directed to their steps, whom the world hath counted fools, because they could not be satisfied to take the way of the world. We proceed now,

II. To shew that this way of religion, is the way of wisdom.

1. The only wise God has directed the children of men unto the way of religion, and therefore it must be the way of wisdom. Do they not act wisely that take the course to which God has directed men. What is our Bible, but a system of precepts of religion. It is God's word commanding and recommending this way to us. This was the way in which God set man at first. When by sin he lost his way, it pleased God to make a new revelation of his will and to set him on his way again, the way of religion in faith and holiness.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ brings his people to this way and leads them in it to the end. "He is given to be a leader and commander to the people." He that is the wisdom of the Father, is the guide that hath gone on the head of the blessed company that travel this way through the world: and they run looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of their faith. He leads his people off from the way of sin and of the world, into the way of religion. He guides them in it and keeps them on it unto the end. "For this God is our God for ever; he will be our guide even unto death." He knows what is the wisest and best course for them to take, and his love to them engages him to lead them to it, therefore let who will account it folly, it is the way of wisdom only.

3. The Spirit of Christ effectually determines his people to this way, moves and excites and strengthens them to walk forward in it. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." The Spirit searcheth the deep things of God, and the same that is the Spirit of wisdom, is the Spirit of holiness and sanctification. And therefore the way of holiness must be the wisest course we can take.

4. Would you know what way God himself would take if he were walking among men on this earth? We may know this already. The Son of God became man, and dwelt among us, and the way which he took was not the way of the world, but the way of religion and unspotted holiness. "He left us an example, that we should follow his steps." He kept himself unspotted by sin. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He was not charmed

with the world's good things, when they were offered to him, nor driven out of his way by its evil things. "When he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." They were the unseen things of another world which he proposed to himself to obtain, even *the joy set before him.*

5. It is the way that is most agreeable to right reason. Devoting ourselves wholly to God, *is our reasonable service.* The way of sin is most pleasing to our lusts and passions, which being blind as rejecting the government of reason, cannot cease to lead us wrong. But the way which our passions do condemn, is in the mean time the way that reason and conscience do justify. The way of our passions thrusts us down, into the order of brutes, which follow their appetites; but the way of religion advances us to walk in the way of rational creatures.

6. It is the only way to happiness here or hereafter. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding." All the happiness of the creatures consists in assimilation to God. The more holy, the more like God; and so the more holy, the more happy. It is impossible a man can be happy in the way of sin, even in the world, while there is a holy God above him angry with him every day, and a conscience within him ready at occasions to disturb his rest. *There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked.* But in the midst of troubles the pious are happy in the favour of God, and the testimony of conscience. With God and in Christ they have peace. "And our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." And when they come to the end of their days, the difference is vastly greater, for then the happiness of the godly is completed, and the misery of the wicked is completed also. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off."

Use 1. Of information. Is the way of religion the way of wisdom? Then first, there is little wisdom in the world, for true religion is very rare. *Few there be,* says our Lord, *that find this way.* Man is born like a wild ass's colt, and he goes on in his folly all his days, till the Spirit of God teaches him the wisdom that is from above. But when once his eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit, and he is made truly wise, to know what belongs to his peace, he is no more in a doubt what to choose. And to the natural blindness of the human mind, the neglect and contempt of religion is to be imputed.

2. The way of sin and wickedness must needs be the way of folly, and they are fools that follow it. "How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" The Spirit of God brands all the ungodly with the name of fools; and they are the greatest fools in the world that live strangers to religion and true godliness, whatever opinion themselves or the world may have of their wisdom. They live fools, whatever way they live, while they live strangers to religion and the power of godliness. They have three marks of a fool. (1.) They are easily cheated out of their most valuable things. Satan goes about these simple ones, till they are tricked out of their souls, their part of Christ and heaven, and all the happiness of another world. "And what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And wherefore do they part with them, but for the gratifying of a lust; a more foolish course than if one should part with an estate for a childish toy. Esau was a cunning hunter, but in the matter of the blessing he acted as if he had been a fool or an idiot. (2.) They suffer the best bargain to slip through their fingers again and again while they are enamoured of those things which are of no value in comparison of it. "Wherefore then is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it." They have no heart for the enriching treasure in the field of the gospel, because they have no judgment to discern the worth of it, while they are busied with vanities that pass away with the using. Their precious time and opportunities are spent in grasping of shadows in many things, while the one thing needful is forgotten. (3.) They feed themselves with dreams and fancies, in which there is no reality. They are foolish virgins with lamps without oil; foolish builders on the sand. Their life is one continued dream, in which they judge aright of nothing, neither of God, heaven, hell, nor even the world. So that there must be a terrible awakening, when they do awaken out of their dream. Again, living impenitent, they die like fools. The rich man in the gospel is called a fool at his death. Then indeed the folly of all such appears. Time spent and nothing laid up for eternity; another world to be gone into, but no preparation for it; what has got their most serious thoughts evanisheth, and what they never minded to purpose to that they must now go.

3. Then the way of religion is preferable to the way of sin, as wisdom is to folly, light to darkness. This men will not see now, but they shall see it, when the great God has determined, who have been wise and who fools. Then it will appear clearly in another world, what is so much controverted in this, whether they be wisest that seek their portion in hand, or those that desire to have it in

hope. Then folly will be written on the foreheads of many now in high reputation for wisdom; and others now deemed fools will appear to have taken the wisest course.

4. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, as the wise man is more excellent than the fool. God who judges according to truth, judges so, and so will we all at length. While all the rest of the world act the part of fools and madmen, they behave themselves wisely, and the end will crown their work, which will show that grace is better than gold, and things that are not seen, are preferable to things that are.

Use 2. For comfort and encouragement to those that are truly godly. And thus it may be, in case being looked upon as fools by the world. Alas! the generation is come to that, that seriousness in religion is sufficient to expose a person to the scorn of those that are unacquainted with it. But if they think you are fools, look you to the Bible, and you will see that they are fools. "If any man will be wise, let him become a fool." It may be also in case of your being defective in worldly wisdom. Our Lord tells us "that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." But if you be wise to salvation, bless God and be thankful. It may comfort you also, in case of being condemned by onlookers in matters in which you have the testimony of God's word and your own consciences. Many a time a man walking straight by the rule in a particular action, will be condemned as a fool by such as do not see the springs and reasons of his acting in that way, when the searcher of hearts will approve him.

Use 3. Of reproof. And it may serve to convince and reprove as fools,

1. Those who value themselves on their carnal worldly wisdom, while they neglect religion in the reality and power of it. There is a generation who make it their great business to gain the world: upon it their hearts are set continually, while religion at best is but an occasional work, and they attain to a certain dexterity in it by this mean, as being the thing that is their constant study and in which they place their greatest satisfaction. But alas! they are wise in trifles and foolish in matters of the greatest importance; they gain a mite, they lose a talent; the case of their souls goes to wreck, and by their boasted wisdom they are fooled out of their most valuable concerns. "For whosoever will be of the world is the enemy of God."

2. Those that are wise to do evil, but to do good have no knowledge. Many have sufficient cunning to contrive mischief, who can do nothing truly good for themselves and others. As for such wisdom, behold the character of it, *It is earthly, sensual, devilish.*

3. Those who account religion folly. O how is the spiritual taste of many depraved, how contrary their judgment of spiritual things to God's thoughts of them. Folly is by them accounted wisdom, and true wisdom folly. "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

Use 4. Of exhortation. Study to get religion, since it is true wisdom. Enter on that course, since it is the wisest course you can follow.

Motive 1. As reason distinguisheth men from brutes and sets them in a higher sphere, so religion is a piece of wisdom that distinguishes one man from another, and makes him more excellent than his neighbour. The nearer one comes to God, who is a perfect being, he must needs be the more excellent. The truly religious are *partakers of a divine nature*, and of all men on the earth resemble the God of heaven most, as *being followers of God* and *partakers of his holiness*.

2. Religion is that wisdom which is preferable to all things else that come under that name in the world.—All earthly wisdom possessed and valued by men of the earth is but a shadow, a dream in comparison of this. For it is practical wisdom. This only is to know the Lord. What avail the profound speculations of natural men in all the learned sciences, the dry and sapless notions of religion in formal professors, which never make them better men though more knowing. The excellency of this wisdom is, that it casts the soul into the mould of truth, sanctifies the heart, and regulates the life, in a conformity to the divine nature and will; and thereby perfects human nature, raising up a glorious fabric out of the ruins in which it lay by reason of the fall.

Again, Religion is wisdom for the one thing needful, the better part. The wisdom of the world is low and grovelling in the advantage with which it is attended. It may make a man more fit to manage his worldly business, more acceptable and useful in civil conversation. But also all this reaches only to the outworks, in the mean time the soul in its greatest concerns is neglected. But religion advanceth the life of the soul, in the favour of a communion with God, evidenceth the person's title to heaven, and carries him forward in the way to everlasting happiness. For, saith wisdom, "whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord."

Farther, it is wisdom for the better world. "For the wise shall inherit glory." What pitiful wisdom is that, whose designs and advantages are confined within the limits of time. The profits of the worldly-wise man as to himself must die with him; *in that very day his thoughts perish*. But the works of the spiritually wise follow

him into the other world, Rev. xiv. 13. There they joyfully reap through eternity, what they have sown in time.

Lastly, If you be not religious indeed you must be arrant fools. Fools for time and fools for eternity.—Without it you remain in the fallen miserable state in which you were born, and without it you will die in the same state without God, without Christ, and without hope, and thus be miserable for ever. "For without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Doctrine II.—The ways of religion are the most pleasant and peaceful ways.

There are two things to be handled here, the pleasantness, and peace to be enjoyed in the ways of true religion.

We are to speak first of the pleasantness of the ways of religion. If one be for a pleasant life, let him lead a religious life. This is a paradox not easy to be believed, but by those who find it so in their own experience. Let us here,

I. Inquire to whom are the ways of religion pleasant.

II. Evince the ways of religion to be pleasant.

III. I shall evince the ways of religion to be the most pleasant ways. We are then,

I. To inquire to whom are the ways of religion pleasant?

1. To those who have the art of walking in them.—As in all trades there is a certain art, which, when persons have attained, the trade turns easy and pleasant to them; so it is in religion. Thus Paul had learned a contentment in every lot, Philip. iv. 11. so that he could walk with pleasure in every condition in which providence placed him. The reason why we have so little pleasure in religion is, we are but bunglers at it, it seldom goes right with us, the work is often notably marred.

2. To those who habituate themselves to close walking with God. *Enoch walked with God.* And says Paul, *our conversation is in heaven.* Such descriptions of the Christian life evidently imply that there is a pleasantness in it. The beginning of a new course of life is commonly the most difficult and unpleasant. And that which makes religion so difficult and unpleasant to us, is either, that we are yet but to begin it in earnest, or that we stay not at the work and hold hand to it, but make such interruptions, as that we are always as it were but beginning. Whereas when the first difficulties are surmounted, if we could then hold on steadily, the work would become easy and pleasant.

Lastly, In respect of the pleasure that springs up from them. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." The most harsh and bitter ways of religion, as of repen-

tance, sorrow, mortification and the like, have a pleasure that in due time ariseth from them, like the pangs of a travailing woman, which end in the joy of a man-child brought into the world. Even of these thorns men gather figs, and in these bitter sorrows, and sharp exercises and conflicts, are the seeds of joy and pleasure; and from under that cloud will bright beams burst forth. For these are but the path of pain leading into a paradise of pleasure, and at length the poor mourning, tempted Christian will go on like Samson, when he took the honey out of the dead lion, and went on eating; saying, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." For such darkness is as the dawn of the morning which goes on to broad day. We proceed,

II. To evince the ways of religion to be pleasant, even ways of pleasantness. This appears if we consider,

1. The testimony of the saints who in all ages have given this for their verdict of the ways of God to the world. And though the graceless world contradict this, we may decline them as incompetent judges in this matter; for how can blind men judge of colours, or men whose taste is vitiated, judge of savoury meats. One eye-witness is worth an hundred ear-witnesses.—The testimony of the saints is to be regarded, as of those who declare, "what they have seen, and tasted, and handled of the word of life," to which others cannot pretend. Now we have the verbal testimony of the saints. Job gives them a noble testimony. "I have, says he, esteemed the words of his mouth, more than my necessary food." How amply does David speak of them. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine encreased." He preferred a day in waiting upon God to a thousand. Paul tells us from his experience of a joy in the most rugged parts of the way. "I take pleasure, says he, in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions; in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." Peter speaking of afflicted saints, speaks forth even their pleasure found in the ways of religion. "Believing, says he, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

We have also their real testimony, their deeds and practices witnessing the pleasure in the way of religion. Joseph would rather venture all, than exchange the pleasure which he had in his untainted chastity, with the sensual pleasure of sin. "Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Daniel would rather be cast into a lion's den, or fiery furnace, than forego his religion. How many of the saints have chosen a stake or a gibbet, rather than leave the

way of religion. They were not insensible of pleasure, for they were men as well as saints, but behold the mystery of it. "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." In the mean time they could say, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world."

2. Pleasure, innocence, and holiness, arrive always together at their height. The world was never so pleasant, as while Adam stood in his integrity. Whenever sin entered, there followed a train of miseries and disgusts. When sin shall be expelled, and the saints lodged in heaven, *they shall drink of rivers of pleasure*, for then holiness shall be perfected. Now this plainly discovers sin is the course of all displeasure to us; and therefore the ways of religion must needs be ways of pleasantness, where it is to be found for the present, and which leads to the perfection of pleasure in the life to come.

The way of religon is the most god-like way and life in the world. They who walk in it, *are to be followers of God as dear children.* Our Lord Jesus Christ followed this way. "My meat, said he, is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." He followed it exactly in all points, and gave us the copy of a perfect religious walk. Now God being the chief good, and most happy in himself, as the fountain of all happiness, he has infinite complacency, delight and satisfaction in himself and his own perfections; and therefore the way of religion must be the way of pleasantness, for it makes us to resemble God.

4. Religion so far as it does prevail, frees us from the cause of our wo. We blame this and the other thing for our miseries, but there is a real cause *why God contendeth with us.* There are two causes which occasion to us all the misery with which we meet in the world. A guilty conscience and unsubdued lusts and affections. Take away these and we should be freed of all our piercing uneasinesses. The way of religion leads us to the blood of Christ, that frees us of the former. "The inhabitant of Zion, shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein, shall be forgiven their iniquity." And religion also leads us to the Spirit, and by him our lusts are mortified, their power is subdued.—Now according to the measure in which the soul is freed from these, so will it enjoy a true pleasure. What pleasure a man who has been in a fever finds in coolness, that will a soul find in a victory over corrupt lusts, which made Paul cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me

from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord." In a cutting manner did the moralist answer Alexander the Great, boasting that he was lord of the world. Thou art said he to him, a servant to my servants, a slave to those lusts over which I am lord.

5. The Lord leaves not his servants to walk in the ways of religion in their own strength, but directs and assists them by his Spirit. "I can do all things, says Paul, through Christ who strengtheneth me." This was one reason why Paul took pleasure in the most rugged parts of the way; "For when I am weak, says he, then I am strong." It is a pleasure to a child to go up a stair, when the father holds him by the hand and helps him up every step. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." Our Lord never enjoins his people to bear their burden alone, but says he, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee." When he orders you to do a piece of duty, he lays in meat for the work, or to bear a cross, he strengthens for bearing it. Now, as it is pleasant sailing when the wind blows fair, so it is pleasant walking in the ways of religion under a gale of the Spirit.

6. The Lord binds upon his saints the walking in his ways with the softest and sweetest ties imaginable, the answering of which must needs create a pleasure in the doing thereof. I own that terrors and curses pursue the sinner till he has entered upon this way. But when once he has entered into it, his duty is bound upon him by the ties of the covenant of grace, even gospel ties, which is the word of his grace, and the law of love, John xv. 12—14. These have a sweet constraint, 2 Cor. v. 14. The covenant of grace hath no threatenings of eternal wrath, the gospel damns no man, it needs not, for the law will do it, to them that are not saved by the gospel. Much of unpleasantness of religion to us, flows from our acting under the influence of the covenant of works. But that is not true religion, and no wonder that it be not found a way of pleasantness.

7. There is a sweetness interwoven with the Christian walk. "In keeping God's commandments there is great reward." There is a pleasure that attends and is mixed with duty. As merchants invite men to taste their wines, to encourage them to buy; so the Lord gives his people a taste of his goodness to encourage them in his service. Hence the invitation unto the practice of religion runs thus, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." God provided in his law, that the mouth of the ox should not be muzzled that treadeth out the corn. Upon which I may say with Paul, "Doth God take care for oxen? Or

saith he it altogether for our sakes? for our sakes, no doubt this is written; that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope." While the Lord sets his servants to his work, he sets them also to their meat. Each of them may say with Christ, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." There is a pleasure in doing good, which the gracious soul in a gracious frame enjoys. Religion is a reward to itself, and therefore it is a part of the happiness of heaven, where *his servants shall serve him.*

Lastly, There is such a transcendant pleasure at the end of the way that must needs make the way a way of pleasantness. As sin is called the way of death, because it leads to death, so religion is the way of pleasure because it leads to endless joy. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." A great and noble end makes the means leading to it pleasant. Jacob's seven years service, "seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to Rachel." Where the reward is an eternal weight of glory, what burden can be too heavy to bear that we may gain it? It must needs reflect a pleasantness on the whole of the way leading to it.

III. I shall now evince the ways of religion to be the most pleasant ways. There are greater pleasures in them, than are to be found out of these ways, or in the way of sin.

1. Consider religion brings a calm into the soul which no other thing can do. It gives it a rest and satisfaction that is no where else to be found. "Come unto me, says Jesus, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Religion takes a person's heart off the rack on which sin held it, and calms the stormy sea on which they were tossed before. "For the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast forth mire, and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked." Religion brings them out of the slavery and bondage in which they were and gives them true liberty. "I will walk at liberty, says David, for I seek thy precepts." There are three things which will place this in its proper light.

First, religion breaks the reigning power of lusts and corruptions, which create the soul much uneasiness. *Sin shall not have dominion over you.* Lusts unmortified must needs have a restless soul. These are worse than so many Egyptian task-masters over the soul, all calling it to serve them. The soul has thus *to serve divers lusts and pleasures*, and these are contrary one to another. They draw the

heart in different directions at once. Pride lifts it up, covetousness presses it down, while envy, malice, and hatred, agitate and distract it. What a blessed calm must then be in the soul, at Christ's accession to the throne of the heart, when there is so many masters are subdued and deprived of their power.

Secondly, Religion brings the soul to the accomplishment of its desires, and to say, *I have all and abound.* It is impossible to satisfy the cravings of unmortified lusts. They are the true daughters of the horse-leech, and the more they are indulged, the more they still desire. But religion first contracts the desires of the soul, cutting off the luxurient appetites of the heart; bending the desire towards the one thing needful, and bringing them to the enjoyment of it; and then under many wants, "They are as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

While a person is in the way of sin, he is still seeking his rest under some created shadow, and there he can never have it, since the complication of all created things is not sufficient to satisfy the desires of a soul; nothing less than an infinite good can do it. "Open thy mouth wide, says God, and I will fill it." Now religion sets the soul on the breasts of the divine consolation and in them it finds enough. In God the soul returns into its rest; for in God there is enough to afford the soul a pleasant contentment, even in the midst of all outward wants. Besides, religion dries up the devouring depths of earthly desires which plagued the soul. "Whosoever, saith Jesus, drinketh of the water, that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." Christ becomes a covering of the eyes to the soul upon its having made the blessed change. For this pearl of great price, the person parts with all that he hath, that he may possess it.

Thirdly, Religion brings the soul into a state of resignation to the will of God. It discovers infinite wisdom tempered with love and good-will, in the ordering of our lot, and so the soul rests in that. *The will of the Lord be done.* That man must needs have a profound calm within, when nothing crosses his will, but what confusion must be then, where things are still contrary to the will. Now while there is a God in heaven, no man will get all his will. "For God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." And though men's will stand against his like a rock, he will rend that rock to accomplish his pleasure; if it will not bow he will break it. Now the yielding bush stands fast in the earth, while the lofty oaks are turned over with a tempestuous wind. And thus while men out of the way of religion meet with many sharp disap-

pointments, nothing falls wrong to those who are in that way. If God will raise him high, he is pleased, or if he lays him low he is pleased. And thus in the midst of storms he enjoys a calm.

Use 1. Let this reconcile your hearts to the way of religion, as a pleasant way. There is an objection against it lies deep in the hearts of all natural men.—They consider God "as a hard master, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed." But it is a groundless prejudice, and for the removal of it nothing is necessary but come and see.—And O! it is sad that men should take up objections against religion merely on trust, and though they try many ways to find out a pleasant one which they may follow, yet they will not allow religion a fair trial also.

2. Let this engage you to prefer the way of religion to the way of sin, because it is the most pleasant way. You have known something of the impure pleasures of sin, but religion shows you a more excellent way, a way in which alone true pleasure is to be enjoyed. —There is a sweetness in religion to those that are so happy as to break the shell to come at the kernel. Get forward then to the inner court and you will be made to say, It is good to be here.

2. Consider that religion frees a man from much trouble, with which the way of sin always plagues him. Ungodly persons "will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity." With how much ease and pleasure does a man walk, who, on his journey, goes straight on the highway, in comparison of him, who, having lost the way, traverseth hills and mountains, woods and marshes. This is the case between the saint and the sinner, as will appear from these considerations.

I. There are many corruptions and lusts, that in their own nature are a punishment to themselves. It was not without reason that envy hath been represented as a serpent gnawing its own tail; *for envy slayeth the silly one.* Covetousness and anxiety for the world stretch the heart on tenter hooks. Wrath and passion carry a man out of himself. Fretfulness and discontentment is a secret fire burning and consuming in the midst of the bowels. It is so in other cases. How pleasant a life then must a charitable frame of spirit, a holy carelessness, a meek and contented disposition make.

Again, How much trouble is there in making provision for lusts, and this religion cuts off. The covetous man rises early, sits up late, eats the bread of sorrow to accomplish his desire. "The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight." The drunkard bereaves himself of his sleep to satisfy his lust. The proud and ambitious man is at great trouble to accomplish his end. Now from all this

religion delivers a man, causing him to walk at ease and liberty. And for what end is all this waste in pursuit of lusts, but to buy destruction, or at best to lay in matter for bitter repentance.

3. Much trouble arises from the disappointments with which men meet in the pursuit of their lusts, when they cannot be gratified. Ahithophel's wicked project miscarries and he hangs himself. Joseph's mistress is disappointed, and she boils with rage for revenge. —Disappointments in the way of sin are often galling and cut to the heart, as Jonah felt on the blasting of his gourd. But religion cutting off sinful desires and hopes, leaves no room for the trouble of these disappointments.

4. What trouble arises from lusts gratified. They bring forth bitter fruits which set the sinner's teeth on edge. Besides the sting which they leave in the conscience, they have such a cursed train of mischiefs following them, that, though men had no regard to conscience, yet regard to themselves might make them quit the way of sin. We often see how the gratifying of a lust exposeth to an untimely end. How does it often ruin families and particular persons. See what a multitude of miseries are grafted upon one sin. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek the mixed wine.

3. Consider that the most exquisite pleasures to be found in the way of sin, are nothing comparable to the pleasures to be found in the way of religion. "There be many, says David, that say, who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time, when their corn and their wine increased." There are various things which confirm this truth.

1. The pleasures of true religion are of such an elevated nature that all others are but low and grovelling in comparison of them. I shall name some of these pleasures and may bid defiance to the world to find any like to them.

1. There is the pleasure which the soul finds in a victory obtained over lusts and corruptions. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." A soul is never in better case, than when it finds Christ letting blood of the heart vein of a lust, nor more solidly joyful than when they see them nailed to the cross.—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The pleasure which a person hath in gratifying of a lust, is the pleasure of a ser-

vant; but that in the victory over it, is that of a master. The former is a borrowed one, brought in from without himself, the other is from within. "For a good man shall be satisfied from himself."

2. There is the pleasure which persons find in the approbation and testimony of their own conscience upon their doing well. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world." This is a feast that is enjoyed at the table of religion, it is enough to make a sick person well, it diffuses health through the soul and pleasure through the whole man. "Fear the Lord and depart from evil.—It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." As the sting of conscience is the greatest pain, so the well grounded approbation of conscience must be amongst the most exquisite pleasures.

3. The pleasure which a person finds in the testimony of God's acceptance of his work. God often gives such testimonies of his approbation and acceptance of particular pieces of service done by his people. "Thou God meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness: those that remember thee in thy ways. "And O how pleasant is that to the soul! "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works." Do but imagine what an earthly king's telling you, he kindly accepts, takes notice of and is well pleased what you had done for him, what a pleasure that would be? But what is all this to the pleasure of God's discovering to his people their acceptance with him.

4. The pleasure one finds in doing good and being useful to their fellow creatures, to mankind. "I have shewed you, says Paul, all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." While some stand as cyphers in the world, of no use to others; while some stand as blots to marr the beauty and comfort of society; as thorns and briars to make others uneasy about them; what pleasure must they have, whose business it is to make others happy, well and easy, so as their souls and loins may bless them. Would men do good to the needy, by these things, which they expend upon their lusts, they would have far more pleasure in the former, than the latter; especially in doing good to and winning souls, *even saving a soul from death.*

5. The pleasure one finds in communion with God; the wind blowing and the spices flowing out, influences of grace coming down from heaven on their souls, and they returning them again in duty, and the exercise of grace. All this is described in the Song, in these

words, "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Christ putting in his hand at the hole of the lock, and the soul opening to and embracing the welcome guest. All the world cannot produce such a pleasure as this, since it is a blessed intercourse with God, the fountain of all pleasures and the most glorious of all objects.

Finally, The pleasure that one enjoys in assurance of the Lord's love, and eternal salvation. This creates an unspeakable pleasure, even a thousand times more than if one were made sole emperor of the world. Now the saints, "Rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls." To think that God is their God, that heaven is theirs, and that come death when it will, it will consummate their happiness that shall never end; that their happiness for ever is secured; an assurance of this will give that pleasure, that nothing in all the world can be like it.

2. The properties of these pleasures of religion are such, that no other pleasures are comparable unto them. Consider,

1. They are refined and pure. "They are wines on the lees, fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees well refined." And so they must be the most exquisite ones, most powerfully and effectually pleasing the soul. All the pleasures of sin are gross and impure. They leave behind them a defilement in the soul and a sting in the conscience. So that however sweet they may be at the brim, they become bitter at the bottom. They leave a disgust behind them; a remorse and gnawing in the conscience, which often make men curse the day they ever tasted them.

1. They ever satisfy without loathing or disgust. All other pleasures are surfeiting, so that at length the heart turns upon them, and persons have so much of them, that for the present they can have no more. And therefore the pleasures of the world without intermission, would be painful. But there is no wearying in the pleasures of religion, let them be continued without interruption, there is no less pleasure in them, than was in the first tasting. They never grow stale, never sapless. Other pleasures are such when tasted; but these when drunk in the most plentiful measure, are longest in continuance.

3. They are most ready and near at hand. When the pleasures of sin are to be brought in from other objects, the drunkards and unclean persons from their companions in wickedness, the covetous man's from his wealth, the proud and ambitious man's from the esteem of others; the pleasures of religion rise from reflections

within a man's own soul. *A good man shall be satisfied from himself.* They arise from his God and his grace, which are not from him, which he enjoys as much when alone, as in company.

4. They are the strongest and most engaging pleasures. For they continue under the greatest hardships of the world, and even in the face of death. Where are the pleasures of the way of sin, when one is deprived of his wealth, health, and much more when lying on a deathbed, in view of eternity. They fall away then, they cannot abide the shock. But the pleasures of religion, spoiling of goods cannot remove, "For the saints know in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." A prison cannot do it. "Paul and Silas sung there." Shameful treatment cannot, "For they rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake." And in the face of death these pleasures put a new song in their mouth. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Finally, These pleasures are lasting. Others are but vanishing shadows, or like a dream that passeth away. "The pleasures of sin are but for a season." What indeed are the pleasures of sin but as "the crackling of thorns under a pot, and the end of that mirth is sadness." But the pleasures of religion endure. "I will see you again, saith Jesus to his people, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." They begin in time and they are carried on through eternity, while there remains with others nothing but the bitter dregs of theirs.

5. Consider that religion helps a person to draw the greatest pleasure from created things which they can afford. No man enjoys the pleasure which created things afford, in that measure that the truly religious man does. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." Thus in the way of religion, a man stands fairest for having pleasure in the comforts of life. For,

1. It makes a man enjoy what is allowed him from them, without fretting for the want of what is denied him. Religion teaches us "in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content." How often do men's corruptions raising upon wants in the creature, embitter all that might be had from it; and the evil that is about it, squeezes out the sap of the good that is in it. But the renewed soul would find itself pleased.

2. It seasons and sweetens the pleasure of created things, while the saints reckon they have them with God's good-will and favour. This puts an additional sweetness in lawful enjoyments to them,

while others have the pain of thinking of God's anger coming along with, and annexed to the forbidden fruit.

3. Religion helps a man to take pleasure in those things which to a carnal man can yield none. Therefore, says Paul, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Moses preferred the afflictions of the people of God, to the pleasures of Pharaoh's court. So that the soul by means of religion, gathers figs of thorns, which can serve only to annoy the ungracious world.

4. Religion extends the fund of the man's pleasure over the whole world. It teaches a man to rejoice in the works of the Lord, and to notice the divine wisdom, power and goodness, which appear in the whole visible world. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure in them." It is observable, that the pleasure which men who go on in the way of sin have from the creature, arises chiefly from artificial things invented by luxury, which bewrays their loss of that innocent pleasure, arising from the works of God as he made them.

5. It gives a man a right of property in created things, so that he cannot but enjoy them with the greater pleasure, having a sense of his property in them.—*All things*, says Paul to believers, *are yours*. One can take more pleasure in a cottage of his own, than in a palace that is not his. It is a pleasure to be able to say of any good thing, it is my own. And that a gracious person may say of all things. Hence that paradox, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Use. Believe then that the way of religion is the most pleasant way. You have all ground to receive this testimony concerning it. And if it were received, it would engage you to say, *As for me, I will serve the Lord.* Alas! how sad is it, that people would in effect court their own destruction in the rugged ways of sin, and flee from their happiness in the pleasant ways of religion. Indeed we are in a valley of tears, but we might gain our salvation, with as little trouble to ourselves, as we take in compassing our own ruin. We come now,

In the second place, to speak of the peacefulness of the ways of religion. Peace is what every one desires. Even the end of war is peace. All seek it but few fall on the right way to it. The way of religion is the way of peace. Rom. iii. 17. Here I shall,

I. Inquire what peace is to be enjoyed in the way of religion.

II. I shall evince this to be the most peaceful way. I am then,

I. To inquire what peace is to be enjoyed in the way of religion. There is a sevenfold peace to be found in religion.

1. Peace with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is a breach betwixt God and sinners, made by Adam's sin, and enlarged every day by new transgressions. The sinner bears a real enmity against God.—"The carnal mind is enmity against God." And God bears a legal enmity against the sinner. His word condemns him, says, *there is no peace to him*, but a cloud of wrath hangs over his head. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This is his case while in the state of sin, but as soon as he comes into the way of religion, the breach is made up, the cloud evanisheth, heaven smiles on him. He is counted the friend of God. *Ye are my friends*, said Jesus to his disciples. The communication betwixt heaven and him is opened, and he has access to God as a friend, while others as enemies are banished from his presence. Job xxxiii. 23—26.

2. Peace of conscience. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.* Conscience is the best friend, or worst enemy, a person hath in all the world. An evil conscience pierceth much more severely than the sharpest arrow. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" It is a gnawing worm, nay, it tears the soul as a lion doth its prey. The guilt laid on it in the way of sin envenoms the arrow, and makes conscience gall the man. This is the serpent which bites him, who breaks over the hedge of God's laws. But in the way of religion conscience is pacified. The blood of Christ applied by faith draws out the sting. The conscience speaks peace to a regular walker with God. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." This rejoices the soul in midst of troubles, and feasts him in famine. And this inward peace is a sweet sauce to the bitterest dish which providence sets before a Christian; while an evil conscience, even in much outward prosperity, goes along with sinners, and is a dead fly in their best ointment.

3. Peace of heart by the soul's rest in God. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Adam left all his children with a conscience full of guilt, a heart full of wants, even wants that cannot be numbered. They go to created things for the supply of these wants, but in doing so, they go through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. In the way of religion, a person comes to God in Christ, there the soul is at peace and rests in its centre. Here the soul is brought into the ark as the dove, sits down by the fountain of living waters, and is put in possession of the matchless treasure. Thus the believing heart enters into peace and rest, as having all its desire, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. What a disturbed heart had Hannah, but when she had poured out

her soul before the Lord and obtained the hope of a gracious answer, *she did eat and her countenance was no more sad.*

4. Peace of mind. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." In the world there is a variety of events, no man knows what shall be. In the way of sin a person is kept fluctuating in that respect, tossed hither and thither, like a ship without a helm, left to the conduct of the wind and seas. Our Lord forbids this, and says, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind." Be ye not like meteors in the air, tossed hither and thither, sometimes hoping, sometimes fearing, buoyed up with the one, cast down with the other, and so in continual agitation. When a person is not in the way of religion, there is no help against this; but in that way there is peace of mind, to be enjoyed upon solid grounds, and it is the native effect of peace and holiness. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." Behold the sure ground. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth!" And hence ariseth the triumph of the saints, in times of trouble and in doubtful events, Psal. xlvi. 1—4.

5. Peace with the creatures of God. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." While man is at enmity with God, the whole creation stands in array against him. When he goes out of God's way, God's creatures lie in wait to attack him on the least signal given. Upon this, frogs enter Pharaoh's chambers, and worms devour Herod. He may say as Cain, every one that findeth me will slay me. But in the way of religion, he shall have them all his confederates, as all the servants run to serve him, whom their master delights to honour. Angels are their attendants and from the highest to the lowest creature, he may comfortably look on them, as knowing that all is his, because he is Christ's.

6. Peace, even prosperity, as the scripture useth that word. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." Religion is the true way to prosper, to get good success; for while a blasting curse attends the way of sin, a rich blessing is found in the way of religion. It is the way to promote the prosperity of the soul, even as the soul of Gaius prospered. Loose living ruins a man's spiritual state. Living lusts prey like vermin on the soul, deface the beauty and eat out the life of the better part. The soul is the man and while it is going back, though

the bodily health and wealth abound, he prospers no more than the rickety child, whose head grows big, but the body decays.

True religion also is the way to prosper in every other respect. "The godly man shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in season; his leaf shall not wither. And whatsoever he doth shall prosper." Outward prosperity indeed is not so annexed either to the way of sin, or of religion, as to determine in which of them a person is. But there is a promise for it in the way of religion, which shall be accomplished as far as it shall serve to God's glory and their good. "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left riches and honour." But there is no such promise respecting the way of sin. Besides where prosperity comes in the way of religion, there is a blessing in it by virtue of the promise, and it shall prove to the person's real good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." But in the way of sin prosperity is attended with a curse, that hath dismal effects for their destruction. *The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* It was the saying even of a heathen, No body is happy till after death. And we know the end crowns the work. How often do we see it verified in this life, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known?" How often does the stone sinfully moved roll down on them that moved it. "And when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." So that the way of holiness will always get the preference sooner or later. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; and the end of the wicked shall be cut off."

Lastly, Eternal peace. What crowns the peacefulness of the way of religion is, that the end of that way is peace, while the end of the other is destruction. The godly man dies in peace, though he die in the field of battle. This made Balaam wish "to die the death of the righteous. They enter into peace; they rest in their beds." They shall rise again in peace. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." They shall enjoy the most profound peace for ever in another world, a peace that cannot be interrupted. "For the gates of the city shall not be shut at all by day, and there shall be no night there." Now in the way of religion, this peace is attained. We are naturally strangers to peace. Wicked men have none, and they grasp at it without a covenant right. But a soul

coming in the way of religion, is on the highway of peace; nay, one no sooner takes the first step in that way, but he enters into peace. "Being justified by faith, ye have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." However terrible the storms have been, faith apprehending the blood of Christ produceth peace according to its measure.

This peace is also maintained by religion. "Great peace have they that love thy law; and nothing shall offend them." Nothing can marr the peace of a saint but sin. "Peace, said Jesus, I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The world may rob the Christian of his external peace, but his supernatural, internal and eternal peace they cannot reach; these may be enjoyed even in the midst of war and trouble. "These things, saith Jesus, I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The holy steadfast walk with God will have its effect. *For the work of righteousness shall be peace.* And no sin having access to them in heaven, their state there will be without the least disturbance. We now proceed,

II. To evince this to be the most peaceful way. What was said on the pleasantness of this way does manifest this. I shall only add a few things. In the way of sin men may have some stolen sherds of peace, but no entire, no solid peace can be found in it. It is too divine a thing to be found any where, but in the way of faith and holiness. May it not be said to sinners as Jehu said to the king's messenger, *What hast thou to do with peace?*

1. What peace can one have in the way of sin, while God that made him is angry with him. *God is angry with the wicked every day.* All the peace which earth can afford, while heaven is frowning, is but a pleasant dream, a short lived fancy, a fabric beautiful without a foundation, that will fall to the ground with a hideous noise ere long.

But O what peace in the favour of the God of peace! This peace is confined to the way of religion. There the God of peace is their God, and from a throne of grace breathes peace and good-will towards the creature.

2. What peace to a man that is a stranger to the Mediator of peace. "But those mine enemies, saith he, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." Against them, you see heaven is farther incensed by their slighting the Prince of Peace. But the way of religion, the Mediator himself *is our peace.* And the emanations of the divine perfections, all meet

to carry on the peace of the saints, and he who out of Christ is a consuming fire, is through him a reconciled Father.

What peace to a person, who is without the covenant of peace? What hath such an one to do with it, that remains in a state of war against God? But they that are in the way of religion are taken up into the chariot of the covenant, and are making away to eternal peace.

Lastly, What peace can there be so long as stinging guilt remains in the conscience, unsatisfied desires in the heart, while anxieties and fears for which, in the way in which men are, there is no cure, remain in the breast; and divers lusts are reigning and raging within? To those in this state there can be no peace. But O the profound peace, where the conscience is purged, the heart come to its rest, the mind satisfied, and the reign of sin broken.

Use 1. Of information. This teaches us,

1. That religion is the true way to make a person happy, as leading them to the greatest pleasure and peace. Would you be happy, then be religious. This is the surest, the most compendious way, nay, the only way to happiness. To this the poor have as ready access as the rich, and we need not go far for it; "For the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Come hither, then, and thy soul shall find a satisfying rest.

2. Religion is the best cement of society. It is that which makes all relations comfortable by the pleasure and peace which it brings along with it. Were there more religion amongst us in the world, there would not be so many jarrings, it would bring in a blessed harmony, Isa. xi. 6. It is the low degree of practical religion among men, that occasions so many contentions, breaches, and discords, in states, churches, and families.

Religion is the best choice in the world for young or old. "It is the one thing needful, the better part, that shall not be taken from us." The world is a valley of tears and trouble. We are born weeping, and choose what way we will, we will meet with crosses and disasters. Every one needs something to allay his sorrows and seeks it also. Some go to one thing for it and some to another, most go the wrong way. But religion is the best allay that is to be found, and there is nothing in all the world that will correct the bad air that blows in it, in the way that religion will do. Its pleasure and peace will stand those shocks, before which all others will evanish.

4. The opinion of the unpleasantness and trouble of religion is a

most groundless prejudice. This mistake makes many stand back from it. This makes it especially look strange and frightful to young persons, whose years call for what is pleasant and gay. But O consider that in calling you to a religious life, we call you not to bid adieu to all pleasure and peace, but only to change your pleasure and peace, a meaner one for a higher and more noble one; a less for a greater, an unsound one for a sound one, a short-lived for a lasting, even an everlasting one.

Therefore deceive not yourselves with pleasant dreams, shadows and airy baubles, while that which is solid, powerful and lasting is before you.

5. Pleasantness is a very desirable thing. It is one of the great motives to bring people to the way of religion, and it is an attendant of the good old way. It is what all men naturally do desire, but what few attain in a right manner. When pleasantness is drawn from the way of sin, it is a most ensnaring hook. But happy are they that have most of it in the ways of God.

6. Peace is a very desirable thing also, and worthy to be followed. It is another of the motives that bring persons to the way of religion. It is the beauty of society and ought to be followed in the several subjects of it. *Follow peace with all men*, says the apostle. —This calls for peace in our families, and in our neighbourhoods; peace in the state, and peace in the church. It is a pleasant and a profitable thing. Psalm cxxxiii. It is really a wonder that the duty of seeking the peace of the church, should have so little weight with the consciences of men, but that all things tending that way should be so suspicious, when Christ and his apostles so often urge it. Our Lord is the Prince of Peace, the church the society of peace, religion the way of peace; the godly are the meek the quiet in the land. And nothing pleases enemies better than to see the church broken in pieces. The farther from peace the farther from the power of godliness, 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4.

Must we then be for peace at any rate? No. Gold may be bought too dear and so may peace. Behold the boundaries. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." We must give any thing for peace except truth and holiness. "Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction and understanding." But is not truth betrayed by maintaining peace with such as differ from us in some particular point of truth and holiness? Many think so indeed to the breaking of the peace of this church; but the apostle thinks and determines otherwise, Rom. xiv. 22. Philip. iii. 16. But these men who being

touched in the tender point of their own interest, sacrifice the peace of the church to it, and for their own defence break over the hedge, and carry a foul conscience with them. They might learn a useful lesson from the ermin, a beast that has a very precious fur, which it will by no means defile. The hunters therefore lay mud and clay across the way, and then hound the dogs at it. It runs from them, till it come to that mud, but then rather than stain its fur by crossit, it will turn back among the dogs and die.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Be exhorted then all of you to the study of religion. Leave the way of sin and folly and cleave to the way of wisdom and religion. Lay aside your prejudices against it, and come taste and see the pleasure and peace of true religion.

1. You that have entered on the way of religion, come press forward in it, and you shall taste that pleasure and peace that are in it. Cease not to make advances in the way, till you find it so in your own experience. And if you thus press on, you shall say I have found pleasure and peace indeed.

2. You that are strangers in heart to religion, embrace it now. Let the beauty of its ways draw you towards it. Satan has long kept you in the dark about it, told you there is no pleasure nor peace in it. But O believe the testimony of God and those that have tried it, who tell you that of all ways it is the most pleasant and the most peaceful. All you then that are lovers of a pleasant life turn in hither and take this way. Come you that would have pleasure, here is the most pleasant way in the world. Would you spend your days pleasantly make religion the great business of them. Are you anxious to be delivered from a life of grief, heaviness, and sorrow; to have the scales turned, and delight, joy, and satisfaction to come in their room; here is the way. All you also that would have a peaceful life, come in hither. Are there any whose peace is broken by outward trouble, that can get no more peace in the world than a lily among thorns? Any whose peace is broken by inward troubles, going mourning without the sun, broken with God's terrors, harrassed with Satan's temptations, stung with a guilty conscience? Here is a sovereign balm for you, for all your outward sores, and an effectual cure for all your inward pains. Religion will ease you. Faith and holiness will put you all right.

But before I come to the motives, I must remove the impediments, by answering some plausible objections.

Objection 1. Does not common observation tell us that they who keep themselves entirely loose from religion, have a far more pleasant life, than the strict followers of religion? Answer. There is one grand prejudice against this, which may justly call us to exa-

mine the matter more narrowly, namely, that at this rate, the life that is nearest that of a beast is the most pleasant life. But this is a principle of which human reason cannot but be ashamed. Therefore, I say, the common observation thus determining is too superficial to be depended upon. It determines by sensible appearances, and noise. But do you not observe that the shallow brooks make greater noise than the deep waters, and it is not your most exquisite pleasures, but the smaller ones that are discovered by laughter; so the pleasures of religion are above that airy gaiety that appears in such men. To make a right judgment here, you must compare the solid joys of religion, with the airy joys of fools. You must perceive and compare, the peace of mind that accompanies the pleasures of the one, with those twinges of conscience that accompany the other, and you will soon see that you have been out in your reckoning.

Obj. 2. Are not religious persons often found the most sorrowful and dejected ones? Answer. There are great differences as to the natural tempers of some, and grace does not take away but correct these natural dispositions. There are some naturally cheerful that are religious, and some such who are irreligious; there are some religious persons of a more heavy spirit, and so there are of the other sort. Why should religion be blamed, on the account of those who have what is unpleasing in their way, not from religion, but from what is common to men. Again, the sorrows of the religious many times flow from their stepping out of the way. And when persons leave the way of pleasantness in less or more, it is no wonder their sorrow be proportionable, falling into the lions' dens and mountains of leopards. Yet it will be found that the religious heart which knows its own bitterness, with which others are unacquainted, hath also those joys with which strangers do not intermeddle. "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth and is confident.

Obj. 3. What pleasure can there be in many of the exercises of religion, as repenting, mourning, mortification, watching, and the like? Answer, 1. However little there be, there will always be as much as in many of the ways of sin, as envy, wrath, malice, anxiety, fretting, murmuring, striving against the will of providence, and the like. 2. There is a pleasure at least at the root of these exercises of religion, which springs upward in solid joy. "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." Yea, there is a pleasure in them, while they go on and prosper in a person's hand. It is a pleasure to a gracious soul to find the heart loosed from the bands of wickedness, to get victory over a corruption, and to stand its

ground against temptation. Godly sorrow and joy are not inconsistent. Hence the command is, *rejoice with trembling.*

Obj. 4. But is not trouble the ordinary companion of religion? Answer, Choose what way you will; the storm of trouble blows so vehemently in the world, that you can never altogether escape it. But religion brings peace in the midst of trouble. It removes inward troubles of conscience, it brings the heart and mind to rest in God and acquiesce in the disposals of providence, and makes a person inwardly easy, while under outward troubles. "In the world, says Jesus, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Yea, as the well cultivated field bids fairest for the best crop, so the most afflicted Christians have commonly the greatest incomes of peace and joy, 2 Cor. i. 5. and xii. 10.

Obj. 5. I have tried religion and have not found it so. Answer, Since others have tried it as well as you and find it so, you must conclude it is so, though you have not found it. Look into thyself, and thou wilt find the cause of it there. There are many that try the ways of religion with their old nature unrenewed, how can it but be heavy to them. Some try them in the way and under the influence of the covenant of works, not in the way of believing: no wonder then that they complain, since they mistake the yoke of the law for the sweet yoke of Christ. Some are but entering upon the way of religion, and no wonder they feel it hard going up the hill of Zion, who have not been used to such kind of travelling. Some are so inconsistent in their religious endeavours, that they never take it but by fits and starts, they never inure themselves to the life of faith, and a close walk with God; what wonder then if they continue strangers to the pleasures of religion. Some are so superficial they seldom if ever enter into the spirit of it, in inward spiritual worship and communion with God, and while they still stand by the outskirts of it, and do not dip into religion, it is no wonder they fall short of the pleasure of it.

Take for instance the duty of prayer, in which God's people have found much peace and pleasure. Yet how can it be so to one who goes to it with his taste quite vitiated with the luscious sweets of sin, who makes his address to God, purely as a criminal to his judge and dare not call him Father, who has done with it, ere it be well begun, whose heart is wandering hither and thither in the time of it, or who content themselves with the lip labour of it? These objections removed, consider these motives following.

Motive 1. Embrace the way of religion, that pleasant and peaceful way: for whatever can make a way pleasant and peaceful is to be found in it. Consider here,

1. It is the King's highway, not a by-path, Isa. xxxv. 8. It is the way marked out and determined by the King of heaven, for mortals to walk in towards eternal bliss. The Father has appointed it by his eternal decree, Eph. ii. 10. The Son of God in man's nature trod every step, and marked it out by the prints of his feet, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. The Spirit of the Lord not only points it out to sinners, but guides his people to it and on in it.

2. It is the way, the only way to Immanuel's land. "For without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It leads to the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city, the celestial paradise, and has such a close connection with it, that they who are once set fair on the way are said to be come to these already, Heb. x. 22, 23. And were it otherwise ever so unpleasant, this is sufficient to denominate it a pleasant way. It is a pleasant way that ends so pleasantly, especially considering that the opposite way of sin leads to the chambers of death.

3. The pleasant land to which it leads is always within the reach of a traveller's eye, from the first step to the last upon it. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." Faith embracing Christ and all his salvation, fixes its eye on heaven at the very first step. And if the traveller lose sight of it, at any time, he may impute it to himself, the weakness of his eye that cannot see afar off, the mists and fogs that arise from the forbidden ground, to which he often turns aside. The Lord of the land allows the travellers to keep it in their view all along. Like Moses, *they may have respect unto the recompense of reward.* And it is a city set on an hill that cannot of itself be hid from those that are on the way.

4. It is a plain straight way. The great direction in this way is, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." The turning and winding way, where travellers are ready to lose themselves, is the way of the crooked serpent. But blessed are they that keep straight, for they are in the pleasant way to blessedness, Psal. cxix. 1. One lust may be contrary to another, so one error to another, that makes the way of sin a crooked uneven way. But all graces, duties, and truths, centre in God in Christ, and so lead to one and the same point.

5. It is a clean way, there is not a foul step in this way, and the unclean cannot walk in it, Isa. xxxv. 8. There are on every hand mires into which many fall and perish; but they are no part of the

way of religion, but the way of sin. "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." As long as the soul keeps this way, it remains sweet and clean, and in a florid beauty, lovely in the eyes of God, and of men whose eyes are opened. It is true the world loaths it, but that is as swine do a clean palace, to which they prefer the dunghill. But it is the godlike, heavenly way.

6. Though there be difficulties in the way, yet there is sufficient help at hand to carry a man through the most difficult step. "My grace, saith Jesus, is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." God lays no burden upon his people, but what he allows them strength to bear. If he orders them to go through the fire or water, he hath promised to be with them, and to keep them, Isa. xliii. 2. If they be to swim through a sea of blood, he will bear up their head. And as their afflictions abound, so he makes his grace abound too.

7. It is a well frequented way. It is true, not so frequented as the broad way, in which the devil's multitude goes: yet not solitary. There is a cloud of witnesses hath gone before on that way, and it is by the footsteps of that flock we are now called to go. And there is never wanting some generous souls, who trample on things below, and aspire to the things above.

8. There are inns by this way for the refreshing of the traveller, whenever he is disposed to make use of them. Gospel ordinances and duties are these inns designed for their refreshment, that they may go on the more vigorously. "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." And never were inns by a way more acceptable to a weary traveller, than the word, sacraments and prayer, have been to the saints.

Lastly, There is pleasant company by this way. Even the society of the saints makes it very pleasant. The communication of sorrows and of joys, and communion of prayers are most refreshful. But the society and communion with the Lord of the land allowed to the travellers by the way is the top of the pleasure. It was observed of Cæsar, that he ordered not his soldiers to go, but desired them to come with him on such an expedition. And that is the very voice that sounds in this way. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." They go with him in his chariot of the blessed covenant.

Motive 2. Let the pleasure and peace in religion, engage and determine your souls to that way. For consider these are the very things which you are seeking after, and which you cannot but seek, you cannot cease to desire, more than you can cease desiring and

seeking to be happy. Why come you not then to the place where they are pointed out to be? It is observable that the gospel invitations are framed to answer the natural desires of men after pleasure and peace, or happiness. You are like men in a mist going up and down seeking these things, saying, "Who will shew us any good?" The gospel answers, here, here it is. "Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters. Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And yet they do not find it, but still hold on their old cry in the mist; and the true reason is, they look upon the gospel answer as a mock, an idle tale, and therefore the blame of men's ruin is laid on unbelief, though they will not believe that to be the cause, and that is a part of the disease. "For who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

Motive 3. Consider the galling disappointments with which you have met, in seeking pleasure and peace otherwise than in the way of religion. Would men consider the cold entertainment with which they have so often met from the world, and in the way of sin; how often in vain they have begged at these doors, and in vain pursued such things, they would turn their backs upon them, they would give over the chase and say with the prodigal, "I perish here with hunger. I will arise and go to my Father."

How often have you found the pleasure and peace got in that way, mean, empty, trifling, sinking far below expectation. "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." These mountains afar off and in expectation, have turned to mole hills when near and in fruition. The deceitful creature and deceitful lusts have promised great things, but performed always meanly; so that were we not bewitched with the love of them, we had come to that long ere now, never to credit them more. But alas! "Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." Have not these pleasures and peace been unsatisfying while you had them? They could not fill your heart, more than you could fill your hand with grasping dreams and shadows. You behoved still to have more, they could not perfectly still the cryings of the hungry soul within.

Have they not been short lived? It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh and his soul is empty. They have died among your hands, and melted like snow before the sun, or gone out like the foam on the water.

How often in this pursuit, when you have got the pleasure, have you not lost the peace? When you have climbed for the forbidden fruit and got it, has it not stuck in your throat, that you could not

enjoy it. *For whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.* This was sadly exemplified in the case of Judas. Has not the gratifying of lusts so disobliged your conscience, that it has broken your peace, and marred the promised feast or the pleasure? O wretched disappointment, where plucking the rose one gets a thorn run into his hand.

How often in this pursuit have you lost both the pleasure and the peace you sought, and in their stead received displeasure and disturbance? "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies." Many times striking at the rock for water, fire flashing in the face is all that is got; and sucking the breasts of the creature, blood is wrung out instead of milk. Is not this a bad reward which sin and the world give us for our love? Is not our labour ill bestowed upon them? "Behold is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?"

Oh! sirs, shall not these disappointments in this way prevail to cause you turn to the way of religion? Will you still hold on to cry there for pleasure and peace, where it is told you a thousand times they are not there to give you? Hath God told you they are to be had in the way of religion, and experience told you that you seek them in vain elsewhere, and yet will you not try religion?

Motive 4. You shall find both pleasure and peace in the way of religion. Not only are they there, but you shall find them there, according to the measure of your keeping the way of religion. "Hearken, says God, diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." What you have been so long disappointed of in the way of sin, you will find there. The fountain is an open fountain, its flowing stream is never dry. "Whosoever, saith Jesus, drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

Come here, and you shall find pleasure, refined, satisfying, strong, lasting pleasure. You are invited to this feast, and God calls not sinners to an empty table. "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." The Psalmist speaks his own experience in this matter when he says, "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." The way of religion is the same as it was then, the treasures are as full as ever; God's bounty is not dried up more than it was then. "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear." If there be any change it is to the better, even so far as the gospel dispensation

excels that of the law, in the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, greater light, and familiarity by the Spirit of adoption.

Here also you will find peace, peace with God, peace internal, eternal, and external, as much as shall be for God's honour and your own good. Behold the blessing poured on the head of the travellers in this way. "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." The black cloud hangs over the way of sin, and sinners have the dark side of the hill, on which heaven lowers continually. But O happy these that walk in the way of religion. They have the sunny side of the hill. If the clouds of outward trouble drop there, yet while it rains it shines, and that is comfortable.

Now is not Christ's offer as good as that of sin and the world? Our Lord offers you pleasure and peace too, and he will surely give them, he will not disappoint you. And will you not fall in with it? It is but the blasphemy of the wicked heart, to say he is an austere man. It is not consistent with his honour, to suffer his creatures to be losers at his hand, or to bring them into a worse condition than he found them. "God is not ashamed to be called their God for he hath provided for them a city.

Motive 5. The pleasure and peace to be found in the way of religion are vastly preferable to all that is to be found in the way of sin, as bread is to husks, or to a stone, or to ashes. This is evident from what was already said, on the third general head. They are truly satisfying, for they are suited to the nature of the soul, which is spiritual and immortal, and can never be satisfied with the pleasures of sense, which are fading. But the pleasures of religion are like the soul itself, spiritual, fit to feed, delight, and perfect the soul, and they endure for ever.

Motive 6. The pleasures of religion are inseparably attended with peace. The way of religion is not only sweet but safe. So says the text. One may perhaps find pleasure in the way of sin, but there is no safety in it. The most pleasant cup that can be found in the way of sin is full of deadly poison. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant; but he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell." There is a sting comes along with that honey, and the smiles are killing. But where one is feasted with the pleasure of religion they may partake without fear in that respect, for there can be no death in the pot. Here pleasure and peace, sweetness and safety are mingled with one another.

Motive 7. You shall find eternal pleasure and peace at the end of this way. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence

there is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Hereby you will find them on the other side of the grave, you will carry them along with you to another world, or rather you will go to them there in their perfection. For all of that kind here is but the first fruits, and a pledge of what is to be had in heaven. There the saints shall enjoy the most refined pleasure in a perfection which we cannot now comprehend, and withal the most profound peace, without the least touch of uneasiness while eternity lasts.

Now I have delivered my message unto you, respecting the pleasure and peace of God's way. I have recommended religion unto you, and laboured to remove the prejudice of unpleasantness which Satan and the world lay it under, intending to dress it up in such a frightful figure, as to make you afraid of it. I now would ask you,

1. Do you now believe? John xvi. 31. Do you credit the report of the gospel, respecting the way of religion? Do you believe it to be the true way of pleasure and peace? I am afraid the hearts of some do look on what has been said, but as pulpit flourishes, and idle tales. But what is that, but to disbelieve the word of God, for nothing can be said higher, than what our text itself says on this matter. I tell you, if you be not cured of your unbelief, you will be cured of it, when you come to be in the situation of the rich man, "who when in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments."

2. Are you now resolved to take this way or not? What will you do, will you hold on the broad way with the multitude, and not know the way of peace? Or will you now resolve to turn your back on them and it, and go by the footsteps of the flock? I would say to you as the prophet Gad said unto David, "Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me." Sirs, your all is lying at stake. Your state for eternity turns upon this point. Take heed what you do. Is there any one among us who will say in their practice still, "It is vain to serve God. For I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Such persons have no taste for the pleasures of religion, but are resolved to make the best which they can of the pleasure and peace in the way of sin. Then I must tell you, That you are left without excuse, and are not only losers but despisers of the promised land. For I must protest in behalf of him that sent me, that none among us, young nor old shall have it to say, that they knew not that religion was a pleasant life, but that the veil is drawn off her face, that whosoever would, might see her loveliness and attractive beauty.

I must also tell you that in this you sin against displayed love and good-will. God has not been speaking to you from Sinai with

thunder and terror, but from Sion, with the still small voice. You are not driven with whips into the way, nor dragged with chains of iron, but drawn with cords of love, and yet you will not come.

Therefore I say finally, that by this you do judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. And therefore I declare that if you do not repent you shall never see life, but wrath will be your portion. And it will be dear bought pleasure and peace now, at the rate of everlasting burnings, and roarings under the lashes of revenging justice.

But now if there be any who are resolved to go this way, their question will be, what course shall I take to find the pleasure and peace of religion?

1. Close with Christ the Mediator of peace, in the way of the covenant of peace through his blood. Come up into the chariot in the way of believing. This is the only true foundation of the pleasure and peace of religion.

2. Be still going to Christ in a way of believing for the supplies of the Spirit of holiness, to carry on the renewing of your nature. For the more your nature be renewed and the old nature crucified, the more pleasure and peace you will find in religion.

3. Grow in love to the Lord, by believing God to be your God in Christ, believing what he hath done for you in the great work of redemption, and what he hath prepared for you that love him.

4. Labour to starve your lusts, and to root out the love of the world. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," 1 John ii. 15—17. As long as the gust and relish of earthly things is too quick and lively, the gust of religion will be flat and dull. A heart drenched in sensuality, or any excessive love to created things, will be like wet wood, not easily fired from heaven.

5. Strive to be spiritual in every duty, aiming at communion with God in religious exercises, studying to do whatever you do from right principles, in a right manner, and to a right end, for in these consist the life of religion, Song iv. 16. and v. 11.

6. Be a constant close walker with God, making religion your business; this will turn it to be a pleasure unto you; and the more you go on in it without interruption, it will be the more pleasant.

7. Go often to the fountain to wash, and to make much use of an imputed righteousness. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." This is the way to keep the conscience sweet and pure, to get the peace of God to rule in your hearts.

8. Believe the promises of strength and furniture for duty, and

to go to the duty upon the credit of the promise. "This is to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Lastly, Be heavenly in your frame and conversation. "For our conversation, says Paul, is in heaven." Keep the other world much in your view. Live in the hope of drinking of the rivers of pleasure. Believe the promises about these things, and let it be your main scope and end to get forward thither. So life will be blessed and death no terror. Or if you would have the directions in one word, Live by faith, and then you will find the pleasure and peace of religion. Amen.

Ettrick, Oct. 2, 1720.

THOSE THAT ARE IN CHRIST ARE DEAD TO THE WORLD.

SERMON XXV.

COLOSSIANS iii. 3.

For ye are dead.

THESE words are a reason of the preceding exhortation, to set our affections on things above, not on things upon the earth. We must not set our hearts on, nor by any means seek the things on earth as our happiness; *for we are dead*, and the dead have laid down all their worldly care in the grave, and have no more to do with this world. Now all that are in Christ are dead, yea buried with him and risen again, chap. ii. 12. and iii. 1. And of these only the text speaks, as for others they are yet alive.

Question. In what sense are believers said to be dead?

There is a natural death consisting in the separation of the soul from the body; of this the apostle speaks not. A moral death consisting in a separation of certain qualities from the soul, which are the principles of action according to their kind, which being removed, the soul acts no more in that way, than a man morally dead moves and acts. There is a twofold moral life competent to man. One in Adam, another in Christ; the former our natural stock, the latter the supernatural one. In these, all men, as branches, live a life agreeable to the nature of the stock to which they are united. In the former all natural men are living, in the latter all believers. Those who are in Christ are cut out of the natural stock, and so

they are dead to it; engrafted to Christ, and so they are alive to him. This death of which the apostle speaks, is the dying of the soul to the natural stock, whereby it comes to pass that the communication is stopped betwixt that stock and them, as by natural death the communication betwixt the soul and the body is stopped. This death is fourfold:

1. Believers are dead to the law as a covenant of works. This is the doctrine of the scriptures. "Wherefore, says Paul, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead that we should bring forth fruit unto God." This is also the doctrine of our confession of faith, chap. xix. article 6. So that as the law is a covenant, believers have no more to do with it, than a dead wife has with the husband, to whom she was sometime married. Christ by his death, has removed the obligation of it as a covenant from those that are his, and as it were grinded to powder the stones on which it was written. In the mean time, he gives the same law to believers, as the will of their new husband.

2. They are dead to themselves. "For none of us, saith Paul, liveth to himself." Believers live to him that loved them and died for them. "For me, saith Paul, to live is Christ." Natural men being in the old stock, the covenant of works is the covenant by which they are influenced. Self is the principle and end of their actions. When one comes to Christ, he dies to the first covenant, he dies to the old principle, for behold the law of the new marriage: "And I said unto her, thou shalt abide for me many days, thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man; so will I also be for thee." And so among the first lessons learned at Christ's school is self-denial, by which one dies to his natural, moral, and religious self.

3. They are dead to sin. "How shall we who are dead to sin, says Paul, live any longer therein." The dominion or reigning power of it in them is broken. "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." It is no more their trade and course of life which they choose. "He that is born of God doth not commit sin." The firm hold which their heart and affections had of it is loosed, and it lies on them as a burden of which their souls are weary.

4. They are dead to the world. "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." There they sought their happiness before they came to Christ; there they always sought a resting place, and satisfaction to their hearts. Their affections lay

in them dead to God and the things of another world; but living and lively to the things of a present life. But now the glass is turned, and they are dead to that world, which they valued so much before.

All these are comprehended in the death here meant; but the death to the world is the thing chiefly aimed at. So the doctrine is,

Doctrine.—Those that are in Christ are dead to the world: I shall,

I. Shew in what respect they are dead to the world.

II. What way this dying to the world is brought about: we are then,

I. To shew in what respects they are dead to the world:

1. In their head Jesus Christ, hence they are said to be *buried with him in baptism.* He lived in the world for a time, at length he left it by death, not to return to live any more in it as formerly. He died as a public person, in name of all those that are his; rose again, and ascended into heaven, and they also are risen with him, v. 1. of this chapter, "Yea, they are raised up together, and are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Hence, the believer, whatever he be in himself, looking to himself as in Christ, must needs conclude himself to be dead to the world, unless he will either renounce his union with Christ, or think that though the head be dead to it, the members have no interest in that death.

2. In their own persons, by virtue of the death of Christ, so they are said to be *planted in the likeness of his death.* The power of his death having deadened their affections to this earth; that as the world crucified Christ, so Christ crucified hath crucified them to the world. They are dead to it sacramentally, Col. ii. 12. The sacrament of baptism signifies them to be dead to it, binds and obliges them to die to it more and more. They are also dead to it inceptively. The death is not complete, but it is begun, Gal. vi. 14. Another spirit than the spirit of the world, is put into them, and the death will certainly be completed. They are dead to it comparatively, in comparison with the men of the world, and with themselves in their unrenewed state: We proceed,

II. To shew what way this dying to the world is brought about.

1. In the day the Lord begins to deal with the soul, he finds it living and lively to the world. The man's heart and affections are set upon it. He loves it, lives to it, and longs for it, more than any thing else. Their constant cry is, who will shew us any good. His life is wrapt up in it. If it smiles he is well; if it frowns he is broken. He knows nothing better, he desires nothing better. From it he seeks his satisfaction, and without it he can have none.

2. God blasts the creature to the man. He comes to the world's springs, but behold they are dry, the broken cisterns have no water in them. The bed is shorter than he can stretch himself upon it, and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it. These disappointments make a sick heart, and are by a gracious God blessed to be the forerunners of his dying to it. He struggles as one in sickness, being anxious to preserve his life, but all in vain. Thus the prodigal "would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."

Lastly, The Lord holds out to him, and by the power of his grace brings him to, and sets him upon the breasts of his own consolation. We see all this exemplified in the parable of the prodigal son, Luke xv. 17—24. The Lord effectually discovers to him on the one hand the vanity of the world, and makes the man say there is no hope; on the other his own fulness, and brings the soul to Christ for all. "Thus the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." So the soul dies to the world. This death to the world, is the dying of the heart and affections to it. The grace of God deadens the man's affections to the things on earth, looses the lively firm hold which the heart took of these things, so the heart falls off from them to God himself, and the things above.

Use 1. This may serve for a trial of our state, whether we be in Christ or not. *Are you dead to the world?* This is the trying point in our text. And it will be a trying point to us all. It is certain we cannot serve two masters. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If we be living to Christ, we are dead to the world; and if we be living to the world we are dead to Christ.

Question, What are the characters of one dead to the world?

Before I answer this question, I premise four things:

1. This death is but imperfect in the best while here, and is never perfected till death comes and separates the soul from the body. Hence though the Apostle tells them in the text that they were dead, yet verse 5, he exhorts them "to mortify their members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, and the like." Still there is flesh as well as spirit in the regenerate, and that flesh, though dying, yet hath its lustings. Hence, it is compared to crucifying, which is a lingering death, Gal. vi. 15.

2. This death is a matter of great difficulty to accomplish. Any death whatever is difficult. A death-bed though a down bed will be hard. It is one of the hardest kinds of death, a crucifying. The

difficulty of it is also held out, under the notion of the weaning of a child from the breasts, Psalm cxxxi. 2.

3. The case being thus, our gracious God for Christ's sake, looks upon the habitual fixed bent of the soul towards himself and away from the world as dying to it, though the remains of corruption do cause it to make sallies another way. He looks to the soul's deliberative choice, sincere aims, and endeavours to be quite dead to the world, as a dying to it, and the longings of the Spirit to be free of it. Rom. vii. 24, 25. 2 Cor. vii. 12. Gal. v. 17.

4. Wherefore the characters of this death are more or less to be found in one, as he is more or less dead to the world. Sometimes a gracious soul may, in a triumphant manner, have the moon so under his feet, that he values it no more than a handful of dust, Gal. vi. 14. At other times the enemy may rise and drag him at his heels, as he did with Peter in the high priest's hall. However they have a constant war with him, in which they sometimes lose and sometimes win a particular battle; but they will always be overcomers in the war. "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

These things being premised, I now, in answer to the question, observe,

1. That he who is dead to the world is a resigned man, resigned to the disposal of divine providence. "If any man, said Jesus, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. The Lord, say the saints, shall choose our inheritance for us." When once a man is dead, his friends may do with him what they will. He opposes them not, let them set him up on high, or lay him as low as they please. So is he that is dead to the world laid at the Lord's feet. With David they say, "Behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him." If that which is crooked in their lot cannot be made straight, they yield to it as it is. If their lot be not brought up to their mind, they endeavour to bring down their mind to their lot; studying "in whatsoever state they are therewith to be content."

2. The world's joys and smiles do not go deep with him, his heart does not sink in them, but uses them passingly with a holy carelessness, 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. As the dogs of Egypt lap their water out of the Nile cautiously, for fear of the crocodiles, so does the godly man taste the joys of the world. Lay a dead man before a fire, he will gather some warmth, but it will soon be gone, for it goes not far in. But when a living man is in that posture, it will go through him and abide with him. So worldly men's worldly joys go deeper,

and make deeper and more lasting impressions upon them; than the worldly joys of godly men do.

3. The world's sorrows and frowns do not much pain him, they go not so deep into the heart as other sorrows do. They weep as though they wept not. One can bear an incision into a mortified member without much trouble, while the cutting in a sound place will bring a terrible anguish. The truth is, the grace of God suffers neither the worldly joys, nor sorrows of the saints to come to that perfection which they attain in others. But the more piercing any sorrow is on account of any worldly cross, it speaks the affections to the world, to have been, and to be still too lively. And nothing makes one's sorrows for the want of any thing in the world too deep, but that their affection and desires of it were too high.

4. His heart is going after the better things of another world, even while he is compassed about with the good things of this. Though created streams be running smoothly, and the world gives him a soft seat, yet these are not his chief comforts, and his heart says within him, this is not my rest. With Hannah he says, *my heart rejoiceth in the Lord.* And with David, *the Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock.* While all the preparations are making for a dead man's corpse, he with his soul is gone to another world, and is minding other things. Those who are dead to the world, may love its good things as a friend, but are not wedded to them as a husband. They may use them as a staff, but not build on them as a pillar. Christ himself being the support of their souls.

5. He will stand without them when they are gone, for they were not the pillar on which his house stood. Therefore when all of them are removed, he will say with Habakkuk, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." One may strip a man when he is dead, and offer a thousand injuries to his dead body. He regards them not, he is gone to another world. The saints take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, "knowing in themselves that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Alas! that soul is in a sad state, whose comfort waxeth and waneth according as his created comforts do so; is hungry, or starved, or full, just as the breasts of worldly things are full or empty. If we were dead to the world as we ought to be, these things might come to us, or go from us, without changing our temper of spirit.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Be exhorted to be dead to the world, and thereby evidence yourselves to be true Christians. This should be a Christian's constant exercise to be dying to it. That death is one of the greatest employments of our life. Labour to be dead, 1. To the world's comforts. "They that rejoice, as though they rejoiced

not: and they that buy, as though they bought not." Learn to be content without them as well as with them, and never launch forth so far into the deep of them, but that you may be ready to come ashore on God's call. Our happiness consists not in them but in God. Therefore if he shall see it meet to deny us even our lawful desires of comfort in created things, mingle our drink with gall, and make us of those who never eat with pleasure; let us be ready to part with what he sees meet to withhold from us.

2. To the world's hardships. We should know both how to be abased, and know how to abound. Paul who knew this, was so dead to the worst things which the world could do to him, "that none of these things could move him." All the advantage which the world can get of us, by the ill treatment we meet with in it, comes by our unmortified affections to it. If we could get these deadened, the devil and the world would have a cold coal to blow at, and could never be able to burn us thereby. A lively faith in God, and of the vanity of the world, and all that is in it, its good and its evil, would make us go through the world's fire, and not be burned. But more particularly, labour to be dead,

1. To your relations in the world. "If any man, saith Jesus, come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." True we are to love them as ourselves, but not as our God; therefore we are to be ready to part with them, and our comfort in them at the call of Providence. It was the commendation of Levi, "that in the cause of God he regarded none of these," Deut. xxxiii. 9. Much of the world's comfort is placed in these, but we had need to be dead to them, when we consider that sin and misery broke into the world by that door. And now that sin has spread like poison in a cup, one is not to wonder that his greatest cross start up out of that from which he looked for his greatest comfort, like a leopard out of the pleasant Lebanon. Father and mother are kindly names, but in effect they are often found cruel as the ostrich in the wilderness. Husbands and wives made one flesh, designed for meet helps, yet are often rottenness in the bones. Sons of youth are as arrows, but often are the arrows turned, and shot through the hearts of those for whose hands they were prepared. Daughters are like corner stones; but these corner stones often fall down on the heads of the builders and crush them. So great need have we to be dead to relations.

2. To the substance of the world. Some have it and it hath their hearts, and parts betwixt Christ and them. This was the case with the young man, Mark x. 22. For no man can serve two masters.

Some have it not, but it hath a firm hold of their hearts, and they constantly cry, who will show us any good. The first are hugged to death by its embraces, the second frowned to death by its flying from them, while they follow it. And what is it for which both have such a fondness, but a load of thick clay; a fair beautiful nothing even *that which is not.* Yet this is it, for which the great and the small strive each with his competitor. And when it is got, though it fill the hand, it cannot fill the heart. And when it is obtained or lost, pierces the heart with many sorrows, 1 Timothy vi. 10. Oh! then be dead to it. Live above it, whether you have or want it. Take it as the traveller doth foul or fair weather, even as he finds it, because he must be forward.

3. To credit and esteem in the world. A mercy it is in itself, but it is often a great idol that parts betwixt men and God. Few but suffer an eclipse in it some time or other. It is a precious ointment, but often providence orders a dead fly to fall into it. The lively lust of pride in the heart, must have it, cannot want it. But O! what a miserable case is that man in, whose comfort depends upon the esteem of others, which in itself is not capable to make him either better or worse; upon that which may be ruined with the blast of a foul mouth; that lies like chaff to be tossed up and down, as the wind blows in the world. Be dead to it then, that if God will make a stepping stone to thy credit and reputation to his own glory, he may have it cheerfully. That if he will have thee to lie among the pots, thou may silently creep down and lie there till he bring thee out again as did Christ himself and his apostles. Be ready to be a fool to the world, that thou mayest be wise.

4. To your ease and liberty. Paul was ready "not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The flesh would always fain be easy, *Master spare thyself.* And when the trouble rises without, then the storm begins within, raised by the unmortified desire of ease. This world is a valley of tears and misery. Therefore if we be wise, we must learn to lie still in the bed which providence makes to us, though there be a thorn of uneasiness in it. "For that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." This is not our rest. Who frets himself because the sea is still in motion, that the winds blow on the earth, the clouds return after the fair blink, and the rain falls? We cannot expect that it should be otherwise in the lower regions. And we should be content to undergo troubles in this world, thinking ourselves happy if we can attain ease in another world.

5. To your own will with respect to the world. "Our souls

should be even as a weaned child." Thy desires must be to thy spiritual husband; to grant them or refuse them as seems good in his sight, saying with David, *Let him do to me as seemeth good in his sight.* A will of our own, not subordinated to the will of God, is a sinful rebellious bent of spirit, and the fountain of all our miseries with respect to things of this life. In the day the soul takes Christ it gives up its own will and resigns itself to his will, saying from henceforth, *Thy will be done.* And much of this death consists in holding by and renewing that resignation. It makes one's will yield to the will of the Lord, as the wax to the seal.

Lastly, To your life in the world, Luke xiv. 26. Your bodies must be the Lord's, not only for service, but a sacrifice too, if he pleaseth. None go to heaven but martyrs, if not in action, yet in affection. Perhaps the Lord may have use for thy health, strength, a leg or limb of thy body, yea, for thy blood. Be dead to them all, that they may be at his service. What a vain thing is the life of man on earth? It is a stage of miseries, a thing of which one may be quickly made weary and sick, and long to be made free of; an inordinate affection to it is a dangerous thing, in this ensnaring world.

Motive 1. Consider the vanity of the world, and all that is in it, Eccl. 1. 2. It is but a heap of vanities, which deserves not lively affections, and they who are most dead to it are the most happy.

There is an insufficiency in all things under the sun, there can be no dependence upon them, without being deceived. They are all greater in expectation than in fruition, fairest afar off, and the more one has expected them, the more piercing is the disappointment. They can never fill the soul. You shall as soon fill your hands with wind, grasp your arms full of dreams and shadows, as fill your hearts with the world's dry breasts, Isa. lv. 2.—There is an unsuitableness betwixt the soul and them. The soul is spiritual, they are carnal earthly things. The soul is immortal, they are perishing, so that your hearts can no more feed on them and prosper, than the fishes on meadows, or dry ground. There is also an uncertainty in them. Nothing is constant here but inconstancy and change. One may be stripped of them in life. "For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away, as an eagle toward heaven." This world is a wheel where the spoak now uppermost turns presently lowest: one day saw Job rich and poor to a proverb. You may have comfortable relations, which may quickly be taken from you, or your comfort in them lost. The most untainted reputation may be killed with the bite of a malicious mouth. And our very life hangs on a thousand uncertainties.

Death will surely strip us of them at length, and at what time it comes we know not. We carry nothing hence but a coffin and a winding sheet; and we are not sure even of these. Sometimes many fair bodies have but served to fill up a ditch, or to be a feast to the fishes of the sea. It were our wisdom then to sit loose to that which we must necessarily part with.

Motive 2. Deadness to the world would make you very easy, in all the changes with which we may meet in the world; he who hath attained it cannot be miserable, meet with what he may. The smiles of the world he would not much value, and the frowns of it, he would little regard. The heaviest cross would be but light, if it wanted the overweight which a man alive to the world lays upon it. What is the rise of so much uneasy walking under the cross, but that we are wedded to this and the other thing, and so being exceedingly glad of our gourd while we have it, we are exceedingly sorry and fretful when it is withered. As ever then you would be easy whatever weather blow in the world, strive to be dead to it.

Motive 3. Consider what this world is; a right view of it might stir us up to die to it: men are deceived with the fair show which it makes. O! to see it in its true colours.

It is Satan's bait, by which he draws men in shoals down the stream into the sea of God's wrath. They run after it, and gaping for the bait are caught with the hook. Judas was ruined with the thirty pieces. Demas turned apostate for the present world. The profits and pleasures of it are in the two horns, with which it pushes many to their wound, and most part to death. The devil attacked the second Adam with it, Matth. iv. 9. For by that means he had prevailed with our first parents.

It is the wicked's portion, Psal. xvii. 14. The most part of it is dealt amongst them who are to expect no portion in the glory to be revealed. It was a sad memorandum given to the rich man in hell, "Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things." Alas! that men should be so fond of that upon which God puts such contempt as that he makes it the portion of those whom he hates.

It is the snare of the godly, in which their feet are apt to be entangled. While they walk through it, they are as among lions' dens, where they are often alarmed, wounded and almost rent in pieces, pierced through with many sorrows. How often does that mist rise from it, which hides their sun at noon day? And therefore they are often longing to be beyond the reach of it; its smiles and its frowns. And it is a victory glorious in their eyes, when they overcome it. The world is a passing show. *The fashion of it*

passeth away. A gaudy vanity that lasteth for a little time, and draws the eyes of foolish men after it; but it will quickly be gone. The stage of vanity will be taken down. This bewitching world will go all to the flames at length, 2 Peter iii. 7. The sweet of that intoxicating cup will soon be drunk out, but the dregs of it will taste for ever to those who set their hearts upon it.

Motive 4. Consider the great advantages of deadness to the world. It would be the very life of the soul. It would fit you to act for God and to be useful to men. Consider who they are that in all ages have been most useful for God in their day, acting for his honour, cause, and interest among men. And you will find they were men dead to the world. "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect to the recompense of reward." Says Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The world is a mighty clog, and often so entangles many good men that they become very restless, and often sit under a cloud. Therefore we are exhorted "to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience, the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

This deadness would also fit you to suffer for God, Acts xx. 24. He that is dead to the world, is in a proper state to take up Christ's cross, and follow him, however heavy it be. This will keep you safe in a time of trial, when others whose hearts are glued to the world will be ready to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

It will fit you for communion with God here, Psal. iv. 6—8. This earth interposeth betwixt us and the sun of righteousness makes an eclipse of the light of the Lord's countenance to us. But were it rolled away out of the heart, and the affections to it deadened, our sky from above would clear up; even as the manna fell after the provision brought from Egypt was done. The Lord's people had much sweet communion with him in the duties of religion, during the times of persecution, for then they were in a great measure dead to the world. But since they have become more alive to the world, they have grown more dead to God.

It would also make you fit for heaven. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" He that is dead to the world his heart is in heaven, and his treasures there, and that makes heaven home to a man. When death comes, it would make a man fall like ripe fruit from a tree; whereas a heart unweaned from the world, makes a person unmeet for death and for another world.

Directions 1. Pray, and look to the Lord for the light of his Spirit, to discover to you the vanity of the world. This alone can make you see to purpose an end of all perfection. Men by considering this world, and by their own experience of it, cannot fail to make a rational discovery of the vanity of it. But alas! that can no more deaden their hearts, than painted fire can burn off one's bonds. But the light of the Spirit is the light of life, powerful and efficacious, and will give one the world under his feet. John Baptist said, "Jesus shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

2. Believe and live in the exercise of faith. "For whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Close then with Christ in the gospel offer, "taking him in whom all fulness dwells," for your all. Thus the heart going out after Christ will drop the vain world. Faith's discoveries of Christ mortify men to the world, Matthew xiii. 45, 46. The heart of man is an empty thing, and must be filled from without itself; and there is no way to take it off the world, but to place them on Christ the better portion.

3. Look off from the world. *Look not at the things which are seen.* Dwell not on the thoughts of the world but turn away your eyes from its deceitful allurements and beg grace for that purpose, saying, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way." The first sin began at looking, and if man was brought down from his perfect innocence, by that means; how difficult is it for the corrupt heart not to be fired with temptation, while a person thus courts it.

4. Look much at the other world where glory dwells. Look at the things which are not seen and which are eternal. The more you think of that world and the happiness there, the more you will prize it. And the more you prize it, the more you will undervalue the present world. They will be dead to the world, who have their conversation in heaven, as from the stars this earth would appear a small thing.

Lastly, Meditate much on the sufferings of Christ, and by faith make application of them to yourselves, Gal. vi. 14. Often think how the world treated Christ, how he became poor that we might be made rich; how he was put to death; and consider all this as for thee, so shall virtue come from his cross to make you dead to the world. Then you will say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Amen.

Ettrick, March 11, 1716.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

SERMON XXVI.

ZECHARIAH xii. 12.

And the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.

IT hath been for some time past, a time of penal mourning through the land, families, congregations, and the nation mourning under the calamities of war; and withal the very earth mourning, and the beasts, under an extraordinary storm. And though both sword and storm are removed, so severe have they been, that the cheeks of the mourners are not yet dried. God grant it may be done before the clouds return after the rain. These things call for dutiful mourning and reformation, national, family, and personal. With a view to these, I am to press two duties, family and personal fasting; the rareness of these at this day, is sad evidence that the land is in a back-going condition. We have both in the text.

The scope of the text is to shew the universal mourning that shall be among the Jews when they shall see their sins.

1. There is a general mourning foretold to be among them. *And the land shall mourn, every family apart.*

As to the time to which this refers, it is plain that this is an effect of that out-pouring of the Spirit, ver. 10. which shall make them mourn for their crucifying Christ, as that piercing is applied as literally fulfilled, John xix. 37. *They shall look on him whom they have pierced.* So that this out-pouring of the Spirit, and consequently the mourning refers to the time of the gospel, after the death of Christ. Now if it be fulfilled already, it must refer to that, Acts ii. 5, 37, 41. But as the scripture does not say that it was fulfilled then, so I judge that it was not the fulfilling of it, though it might be a pledge thereof. For this out-pouring and mourning are to be in a day, "When God will seek to destroy the nations that come against Jerusalem," ver. 9. But the out-pouring and mourning in the Acts were in a day that the Lord was about to destroy Jerusalem itself. Therefore I judge it is yet to be fulfilled, in the time of the calling of the Jews. When their deliverance, ver. 9, the out-pouring of the Spirit, ver. 10, and this mourning shall go together.

It was written for our learning. And O! but it is sweet meeting deliverance from enemies, an out-pouring of the Spirit, and national reformation. We have got something of the first, but alas the two last are not come along with it, and therefore there is the less sweetness in the first, and it is likely to be the more short lived.

God governs the world, and that according to his word, however little men regard it in their management of it; and comparing Scotland's case with the word, we have ground to think, one of three will be the fate of this land. Either,

1. That in a way of judgment, he will let us go on in our peace and ease, continuing an unsanctified deliverance with the generation; so as religion will grow weaker and weaker, and the generation more and more corrupt, till they stink in his nostrils.

Or 2. That in a way of sovereign mercy, he will with our peace send an out-pouring of the Spirit to the advancing and reviving of reformation, which will put life in our deliverance and establish it to purpose.

Or 3. That in a way of mixture of judgment and mercy, he will send on us a yet heavier stroke than any we have met with, and join reformation and deliverance together by an out-pouring of his Spirit, as in the text, producing a general mourning. Now in the text, I say there is a general mourning foretold to be among the Jews at that day. This is a mourning in the way of duty. The word properly signifies the outward gesture of mourners, such as smiting on the breast, or thigh; not that it shall be a mere outward mourning, for it is the effect of that, ver. 10. But it shall be more than that habitual mourning and tenderness to which God's people are always called: an extraordinary, solemn and stated mourning; a mourning in the way of a solemn fast and humiliation, so the word signifies, Joel ii. 12. For that duty is sometimes called fasting, sometimes mourning, Esther ix. 22, 31. Compare Zech. viii. 19. The prospect of these days were the matter of the Jews' fasting. And that this mourning is so to be understood appears from the text itself, where we find those of one family meeting together for this mourning; the whole family going together into some place apart where they might not be disturbed by their neighbours, and consequently setting apart a time for it. All this surely not to sit and gaze on one another, but to spend it in exercises suitable to a fast. Now here observe,

1. The generality of this mourning and fasting. *The land*, that is the inhabitants of the land, the body of that now unbelieving people shall set about it, not here one and there one as before. The cause of this mourning is their fathers' sin in crucifying Christ,

their own sin in approving of it, and so long rejecting him. When the Spirit is poured out on them, they will see his glory and be convinced, and then this mourning will spread over all their nation wherever they be.

2. How it shall be general or national; not by gathering together into the temple, for they shall then have none, nor yet as being enjoined by authority for public celebration. But God will stir up the spirit of families to keep it privately, every family apart. In the times when the gospel hath had more effect than ordinary, sometimes people walking the streets have been sweetly surprised to hear this and the other family, at family worship, who never used to have it before, so will it be with the Jews in that day, in respect of family mournings or fasts. Observe, they will go apart for it. Give over the business of the family for that time, shut doors and windows, refuse conversing with other families, that they may not be interrupted.

2. Particulars are condescended on. The royal family in both branches of it, Solomon's and Nathan's. These as being nearest of kin to Christ should have been most zealous for him; *but neither did his brethren believe in him.* But now their posterity shall see their own and their fathers' folly, and bitterly mourn for it. This seems to aim at their rulers, who in that day shall begin or be with the foremost in this reformation.

In both these their wives shall go apart and mourn. Whether this be meant of their going by themselves in the very time of the family mourning, as some think; or at other times, it holds forth the duty of personal fasting and humiliation, particular persons going about that duty by themselves.

There is an emphatic Hebrew mark on the wives of the house of Nathan, and the same on all the rest following. Therefore I think the true reason why the wives are singled out for instances of personal fasting and humiliation is, that being of the delicate and tender sex, they may be least fit, able, or willing, to undergo the hardship of stated fasting and mourning. But such a portion of the Spirit shall they then have, that even they shall not refuse the work; not only join in the family, but at other times go by themselves.

The family of Nathan was the top branch of the royal family in Zechariah's time, for of that branch was Zorababel, Luke iii. 27, 31. So the meaning is, that even their ladies, however delicate, shall put off their ornaments and humble themselves in personal fasting and humiliation, Verse 13. Levi's family is condescended upon, and among them that of Shimei, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi,

1 Chron. vi. 17. which family seems to have been of note in the prophet's time.

In verse 14. it is shut up with a general, all the families that shall remain, shall take part in this. Thus magistrates, ministers, and people, shall all mourn, repent, and reform.

Before I enter on what I chiefly design from the text, I shall briefly handle some other useful points from this text.

Doctrine I. There is a day coming in which there shall be a national conversion of the Jews or Israelites. The now blinded and rejected Jews shall at length be converted into the faith of Christ, and join themselves to the Christian church. There are many promises of this in the Old Testament, but I shall confirm it from Romans, chap. xi. where the apostle purposely insists upon it.

1. Though that people hath dreadfully stumbled, the more dreadful that Christ was the stumbling stone to them, yet they have not fallen so as never to rise again, Rom. xi. 11. "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy." Now as their stumbling by unbelief did eventually cause the Gentile world to rise to their feet, after they had lain long immersed in ignorance of God, and wickedness: so God will make use of the grace bestowed on the Gentile world, to awaken the Jews to the consideration of their true interest, by way of holy emulation, that they shall think with themselves as the prodigal, Luke xv. 17.

2. The covenant made with their fathers, particularly with Abraham, Gen. xvii. That he would be the God of his seed after him, secures the conversion of that people. It is with that covenant, in respect of them, as with some rivers of which it is observed that they run a good way above ground, and then are swallowed up in the earth, and so run many miles under ground, but at length break out again, and run above ground till they come to the sea. So that covenant runs visibly till the days of the apostles, but now its visible efficacy is interrupted, but it will break forth again in their conversion, never to be rejected more. So the apostle tells us, they are thereby still the *holy nation*, verse 16. the nation particularly dedicated to God, and he will not always want what is consecrated to himself. The national election is still their privilege, for verse 28. *as touching the election, they are beloved for the Father's sake.* And by virtue of the covenant made with their fathers, God has a love to that nation: and God's will will certainly terminate in good deeds at length: and that because the gift and calling of that nation to the adoption and covenant are irreversible, verse 29. *For the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.*

3. The apostle expressly asserts it, verses 25, 26. In these he shews that the blindness of the Jews is only in part, and to last only to a certain time, when there shall be a national conversion, and so all Israel shall be saved. This is not meant of the spiritual Israel, for their conversion could be no mystery as this is. But as the conversion of the Gentiles was a mystery to the Jews, and to Gentiles themselves under the Old Testament, Eph. iii. 3—6. So is that of the Jews, to the Gentiles and Jews themselves, under the New Testament. And as many Jews then would not believe the one, so many Christians now believe not the other.

Use. Believe it and help it on by your prayers. Ply the throne of grace earnestly for it. Join cordially in the public prayers for it, and remember it in your family and secret prayers. Be ashamed to say what is it to us?

Motive 1. They were concerned for us when we were in their case, and they in ours, and therefore it is but just that we repay them thus, Song viii. 8, 9. O remember the case seriously. What think you of Pharaoh's butler that remembered not Joseph, who was so kind to him in the prison. Brethren, we of the Gentile world, were shut up in the prison of unbelief, then they walked at liberty, but minded us. Now they are in that prison and we are let out, and shall we forget them. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

2. Have you any love to our Lord Jesus Christ, to the advancing of his kingdom and glory in the world? then pray, yea, pray earnestly for this. Are you not taught to pray, thy kingdom come. O what an accession to the Mediator's glory will the conversion of the Jews be. Would you see the crown set on Christ's head in the world more solemnly and gloriously than ever it has yet been, then let us join with the great multitude, Rev. xix. 6. *Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* And if we wish to see a great marriage day for Christ in the world, then verse 7. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." O brethren, spread out your narrow spirits, be public spirited and show it here. True, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, to his glory. But O! what a farther rich revenue of glory would accrue to him, if they whose countryman he was, and who crucified him as a malefactor, and justify their deed to this day, were brought to repentance and to own him to be so with us.

3. Have you any pity to a nation of perishing souls? then pray for their conversion. Common compassion should engage you to this, for such a case as theirs is, for the present, hopeless for eter-

nity. "He that believeth not shall be damned." But there is more to challenge our concern for them than for any other nation in the world.

1. God himself hath shown a peculiar concern for them, not only of old, when he took them for his peculiar people; but since, in that he hath made a particular promise of the conversion of that nation, when that of other nations has been wrapt up in a general promise.

2. All the means of grace, and acceptance through Jesus Christ, that we have now, we had originally from them. They were our masters in the knowledge of God, and first put the book, even the book of God into our hands, Isa. ii. 3. Luke xxiv. 47. It was their Moses, their prophets, their apostles, (all of them Jews) that wrote this book, by which eternal life is brought to us. Nay, it is their countryman Jesus, who is the ground of all our hope, who we believe is the Son of God. "For of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." It was the light that came out from among them, that enlightened our dark part of the world. And now that our teachers are blinded, will we not put up a petition for them, *Lord that they may recover their sight.*

3. The church and all the privileges thereof, which we enjoy this day were originally theirs. "For to them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." We are well this day, and all the churches, in comparison of our fellow Gentiles, yet abiding without. And how so, but because we have got into the tents of the Jews, where the Lord shews his glory. "God shall, said Noah, enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be servant. But alas! the original possessors are out, they have left them in a fit of madness; but there is room enough for them and us both, and shall not we pray, that they may come to themselves and return. It is their olive into which we are engrafted, they are the natural branches, Rom. xi. 17—21.

4. Have you any love to, or concern for the church, for the work of reformation, the reformation of our country, the reformation of the world? Any longing desire for the revival of that work now at a stand; for a flourishing state of the church, that is now under a decay? then pray for the conversion of the Jews.

Are you longing for a revival to the churches, now lying like dry bones, would you fain have the Spirit of life enter into them? Then pray for the Jews. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead." That will be a lively time, a time of a great out-

pouring of the Spirit, that will carry reformation to a greater height than yet has been.

Are you longing for the increase of the church, then pray. Alas! our mother that has born seven, languisheth and waxeth feeble. Dry breasts and a miscarrying womb is much her plague this day. But then she shall renew her strength and bring forth many. "For if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Not only shall she be increased with the coming in of the Jews, but with more of the Gentiles. For their conversion *shall be more the riches of the world, than their fall was;* yet to that is owing all the gospel riches this day among the Gentiles. "Then shall the light of the moon be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven fold as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

Are you longing for a prosperous time to her members, by a full table spread for them in ordinances and they liberally fed there? then pray. Our Lord in the matter of his house-keeping brings always the best to the last course. The best wine comes at last. And his dinner which he prepares is good. The church hath been sitting at it more than seventeen hundred years, and many have been brought in to it, and sweetly filled. But the world's day is far spent, now it is near night and therefore supper-time is drawing on; and that is the best meal in our Lord's house. Now when the Jews are called in, the supper is served up. And happy they who have got a share of the dinner, but more happy they who shall share of the supper, before the marriage be consummated in heaven. "And he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me these are the true sayings of God."

Are you longing for the increase of the knowledge of heavenly mysteries, then pray. At the rising again of the witnesses, that had been slain by antichrist, John saw the temple of God opened, the doctrine of the gospel clearly discovered, Rev. xi. 19. But the Jews are converted, he sees heaven itself opened, Rev. xix. 11. yet a deeper insight into these mysteries. And we have no ground to doubt, but upon that great event, there will be a greater insight into the Bible, than is now among the most knowing. That promise however begun to be fulfilled, seems not yet fully accomplished. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Do you ardently desire purity in the churches, the extirpation of

popery, prelacy and profanity, then pray. Whatever be done in these matters before the conversion of the Jews; we have ground to believe that event shall be accomplished with such a purity of the churches, as hath not appeared in the world, Zech. xiv. 20, 21.

Lastly, We have more encouragement to pray for this, than the generations of the people of God that have gone before us. Because we are nearer the time of the accomplishment of the promise than they were. The church hath prayed long for it. The church of Scotland hath ever had a particular concern that way, when it hath wont to be made one of the causes of our national fasts. In the first which we had after the revolution it is particularly mentioned, and I find it in one kept about the year 1653. Let us follow the footsteps of the flock; who knows but some now living may see the accomplishment of it. But though none of us should live to see it, yet let us leave prayers behind us for the conversion of that people. The sins of some live after them for evil as Jeroboam's did, and the prayers of others for good.

There are two things that stand in the way of their conversion. Let us earnestly pray for the removal of them.

1. The horrible idolatry of the papists, scandalizes that poor people at Christianity. When they see Christians sunk in the sin of idolatry, which they know was so provoking to God in their fathers, they are hardened against Christ. Now God hath promised to remove that obstacle out of the way, and it will be removed, that they may come in, Rev. xv. 10—12. O help forward by your prayers. See our Lord's prophecy to this purpose, Luke xxi. 24.

2. The prevailing power of the Turk, who has swallowed up so many Christian churches and keeps so many Christians in bondage, scandalizes them also. But God has promised to remove that obstacle likewise, Rev. xvi. 12. They possess the Jew's land, but that cruel empire will be broken in due time. Whether the Jews shall possess their own land again or not, I will not positively determine: but I confess I incline to think they will. And what sways me in that point, mainly, is, that whereas the apostle, Rom. xi. concludes their national conversion from the covenant made with their fathers, bearing that he would be their God and the God of their seed, the gift of the land of Canaan, and that for an everlasting possession to them, is comprehended in the same covenant to them, though their possession thereof, as of the visible privileges of the covenant, have been long discontinued together, Gen. xvii. 7, 8.

Great are the strivings among the Turks and the papists also at this day. And though by them terrible things may be brought to pass in the nations, for shaking of the nations and churches, in the

just anger of the Lord; who knows what God may have on the wheel of providence. Let us pray that it may prove a fatal struggle, a struggle before death, to both these kingdoms, the eminent adversaries of our Lord's kingdom.

It is usual before a great revolution in favour of the church, that there are great wrestlings in prayer, for the mercy the Lord is about to give, Dan. ix. 2. Ezek. xxvi. 37. He that has a mind to give, gives a heart to his people to ask it of him. And if there were strong cries to the Lord for these great things, at this day among his people, it would be a good sign, that the promises that have gone so long big with these mercies, were near to bringing forth.

Doctrine II. The out-pouring of the Spirit will make a blessed change, on the case of a people or person otherwise hopeless. The land shall mourn. Strong is the grace of God and it will prevail, when it enters the lists with corruption, whatever be the advantage on its side.

I will illustrate this from the case to which the text refers. Consider here these things shining in this case.

1. Grace can bring them back, whom their corruptions have carried quite off the foundation. So are the Jews who despise Christ as a mere man. Such a case is absolutely hopeless in itself, but grace can bring one out of it. He that hath made the rejected stone the head of the corner, can make of the rejecters lively stones built up upon him. Compare 1 Pet. ii. 5. with chap. i. 1. of that epistle.

2. Grace can overcome the strongest, and root out the deepest prejudices against religion. No people in the world are so deeply prejudiced against Christianity as the Jews are. But their prejudices an out-pouring of the Spirit will totally carry away. When the eye is ill affected, things appear in quite wrong colours; but it will cure the eye, and then the beauty of religion will recommend itself, Song v. 9. and vi. 1.

3. Grace can draw men freely out of that way, in which an erring conscience fixes them. The bond of conscience, right or wrong, is one of the strongest ties of which the soul is capable; "therefore publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of God before the scribes and pharisees." The gospel had readier access into the hearts of pagans than of Jews. When sin is held fast as a piece of religion, it is fixed as with bars of iron. Satan is most successful when he drives a wedge of God's own wood. This he doth with the Jews at this day, who from a blinded conscience of the honour of God and his law, oppose Christ. But grace will reach, for it can do it. It did so most effectually with Paul, who verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

4. There is no prescription against the grace of God. Satan by means of unbelief hath had seventeen hundred years' possession of that people as his slaves. The fathers have taught the children from generation to generation to reject Jesus Christ. Yet grace will recover them after all, and denude the fraudulent possessor, though he had so long kept possession.

5. Grace will do that, which the heaviest strokes of judgment could not do. The sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ was a sin without a parallel, so their punishment also was a matchless punishment. "It was such great tribulation, as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." They are under the weight of it till this day. But it has done them no good. O! hopeless case! But as hopeless as it is, an out-pouring of the Spirit will make a blessed change.

Lastly, It will put an end to a national obduration. A nation is blessed with light, they abuse it, God is provoked to plague them with judicial hardness and blindness. Fearful case! But an out-pouring of the Spirit looses these bands of death. Such is the case of the Jews, so has it been for seventeen hundred years, Rom. xi. 8—10.

Use 1. Behold here the freedom and power of the grace of God. It is matchless free, shines like the sun without hire. Blows where it listeth. O what wide steps does free grace make to catch a lost creature, what mountains does it skip over. It steps over even Paul's injuries, blasphemies, &c.

O the power of it! It is the wind of the Lord's Spirit that blows up cedars by the roots, rends the rocks, makes the iron gates of the devil's prison to give way. His strong chains wherewith he binds his prisoners become like tow that the fire has kindled upon. It tames the sinner that hath long been wild, melts the heart of adamant, and makes them, who like the leviathan, count darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of a spear, mourn as doves.

2. You that would fain have Christ and his grace, be not faithless but believing. Whatever your case be, do not conclude it hopeless with respect to the Physician. I think always there is a secret despair of grace, and that more than we are aware of. They say *there is no hope.* Some think Satan's bonds on them are so strong, that there is no breaking of them; their plague sore has run so very long, that it will never heal now; God has so much left them, and given up with them, that he will never more look near them. And if they be praying, that the Lord would break these bonds, Satan steps forward to them and whispers them in the ear, as Mark v. 35. "Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master." But, ver. 36. Jesus saith, *Be not afraid, only believe.*

3. If ever you would see a reformation in the land, trust more to an out-pouring of the Spirit on the land, than to judgment were it ever so severe. It is a folly to be fond of a national stroke, that is the effect of a bitter spirit, not of the Spirit of God. Jeremiah said, "As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the evil day, thou knowest." The most tremendous judgments will not reform a nation, without an out-pouring of the Spirit; but an out-pouring of the Spirit will do it without any outward calamity at all. Our country has got a heavy stroke within these few months, and many a family great and small are mourning under the weight of it this day. But are we any nearer reformation than we were for it all? The Lord has made death ride in triumph among us of late, at an uncommon rate. Our kirk door is beset with new graves, burials have followed fast at the heels of one another. But whoso considers the use made of these speaking dispensations of providence, and how far people are from being bettered by them, may justly fear the time cometh, when deaths shall be more frequent, but burials more rare, Amos vi. 7—11.

Lastly, Yet despair not of the reformation of the land, or of particular persons, but pray, pray for an out-pouring of the Spirit. O wrestle with God and lift up a cry for it. That is a sovereign remedy that would cure all our diseases at once. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth." The work of reformation hath long been like corn in a great drought, yellow at the root, a shower of the Spirit would make all green again, and grow fast. As much as we are divided, this would unite us. As bold faced as wickedness and profanity are, this would stop their mouths. As little good as the gospel does, this would make convincing, converting, and confirming work more frequent, and give ministers of the gospel as much to do with broken hearts, as they have now with hard and impenitent ones. As great lifelessness and untenderness as are among ministers and people, this would purify the sons of Levi, and make the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem pleasant to the Lord, as in former years. It would restore our judges as at the first, and our counsellors as at the beginning; and make nobles and gentry cease from building of Babel, and pulling down of the church and of religion; put holiness to the Lord on the bells of their horses, and willingly set their shoulder to the work of the Lord. O! pray, pray for this. And let not your hopelessness and uncharitableness, as to any ranks of people in the land, whether because of their profanity, apostacy, formality,

deadness, enmity to religion and hurtfulness to the church, shuffle them out of your prayers for good. But cry mightily for the out-pouring of the Spirit, that the whole land may mourn.

Doctrine III. They that share in the out-pouring of the Spirit, will bring home public, national guilt to their own doors, and mourn for it. The cause of this mourning in the text, is the crucifying of Christ, ver. 10. Their fathers did it, and many generations have since passed; but when the time comes that the Spirit is poured out, the then generation shall cry out guilty, guilty, and mourn for it, in families and alone, each by himself, as kindly as if they had been the persons that embrued their hands in his blood.

Reason 1. Because they will find then that they have smarted under it, and borne in their own persons the marks of God's indignation, against the national guilt; and in the mean time be persuaded of the justice and holiness of God's procedure; saying our fathers have sinned and are not; and we have borne their iniquities. In the natural body if one member suffer, the rest suffer with it, so it is in the political body. When God is angry with our mother, the children cannot escape to share of the frowns. And kindly children will therefore be affected with the offence, as if they had given it themselves.

2. Because however unbroken hearts may justify themselves, as to national guilt, especially that wherein they had no access to have an active hand; yet the light of God's Spirit shining into the heart, will bring in the soul guilty in that point, there being so many ways by which one person's sins may become another's, which a tender soul will not dare to purge itself of. They say each with Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." He who hath been among the infected, would have much to do, if of a tender conscience, to swear himself clean; so hard it is, if not impossible, for sinful men to be members of a nation, and not some way or other to be tinctured with the national guilt.

3. Because God deals with those of a nation or church, as one collective body, and tender souls seeing themselves to be of a guilty body, will take it home each to himself. Hence it is that the holy men of God make confession of national guilt, as their own, being themselves of the body, and are affected with it as their sin, in particular, Dan. ix. 5—19.

Use 1. This shows us what is that kindly taking with national guilt, that is acceptable in the sight of God, namely, when people bring it home to their own doors, and lay it before the Lord, as

that of which they cannot cleanse themselves, but need the blood of Christ to take away their share of the guilt. He that looks abroad through the land this day, and beholds the profanity, apostacy, and crying sins of the land, in former and the present generations, and wipes his mouth, and takes up the stone to throw at the guilty, even in respect of those very sins in which he had no active hand, as the murder of the saints and the like, hath very little if any at all of the Spirit of God. They are not of the spirit of Phinehas the son of Eleazar, nor disposed to say with Jeremiah, "The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have sinned." It will never be our declaring against national guilt before men, nor complaining of it only as the sin of others before God, but bringing it home to our own doors, that will be accepted.

2. This shows what will engage all to take with their own part in the causes of wrath against the land. There is a great complaint which all ranks of persons have against one another this day, that every one hides his sin and will not take with his guilt, whereby the anger of the Lord is caused to go out against us. But O! if there were an out-pouring of the Spirit on the generation, it would make a loosening among us, as ever there was in the frozen waters by a thaw. It would set all hearts a mourning, eyes a weeping, tongues a confessing. Each one a crying, *what have I done?* It would pull off the fig leaves, wherewith people now cover their nakedness, and the patches, wherewith they cover their loathsome sores. O, pray, pray for the blessed day.

Doctrine IV. Family and personal humiliation and reformation, spreading through a land, is true national humiliation and reformation.

I shall confirm this point. Consider,

1. The nation is really nothing but so many families united together in one body; therefore as the curing of a man's body is nothing but the restoring of health to the several members of it; so national reformation is nothing but personal and family reformation grown universal, or at least general. Many talk of national reformation who are little solicitious about these, whether of their own or their neighbours. Deceit is wrapt up in fair generals. But this is as great a blunder in religion, as it would be in physic, to tell the physician you would have him cure your body, but as for the members of it, he may let them be as they are.

2. Consider, is not the humiliation of the several parts, the humiliation and reformation of the whole? Would not a number of reformed persons make a reformed family? Would not reformed families make a reformed congregation? Would not reformed con-

gregations make a reformed national church? How was the world corrupted? Did not one man poison the whole? Was it not profanity and wickedness, spreading from one to another, that sunk the world in wickedness. We must then begin at the fountain, if we would stop the stream. A house when it is set on fire, the fire takes hold an one part and spreads through the rest; when it is quenching one runs with his bucket to one part, another with his bucket to another part, and so it is put out; even so must it be in the case before us.

3. In what way does the influence of magistrates, ministers, and other church officers reach to national reformation, but as it reaches to families and to particular persons? If they do not endeavour to reform these, and yet pretend to national reformation, it is a contradiction, it is the building a castle in the air, where there is nothing to work on. If the disease be grown so strong that their endeavours for reformation can do nothing to reform particular persons and families, how is national reformation possible in such a case, more than it is possible for a man to build a regular house of stones that would not build for him?

4. If one hath a mind to reform his family, how can he do it, but by reforming himself and the particular members of his family; as by setting and keeping up the pure worship of God, maintaining unity and peace, and exciting the several members thereof to the duties of piety, righteousness and sobriety, and curbing sin in himself and them. Even so it is with national reformation. And therefore both the national covenant, the solemn league and covenant, condescended upon personal and family reformation as that without which national reformation cannot subsist.

5. Though public humiliation in public assemblies be very good and necessary, yet real humiliation and reformation lies here, without which all the public humiliations are but hypocritical show, Isa. lviii. 5, 6. If ever the Lord pour his Spirit in a notable measure on this church and nation, our public humiliations which have been so managed, will be grounds of public and personal humiliation afterwards, and really mourned over, as that whereby God has been dishonoured, and our own souls cheated, in so far as personal, family, and national reformation hath not been joined with them.

Lastly, Personal and family reformation, is the bond of reformation, in respect of the truth and ordinances of God. Where that is wanting, church reformation cannot last; however pure it may be, it is but like a flower set in the ground without a root that quickly withers. What a good reformation was there in Hezekiah's days, but just in the days of his son all goes, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 9, 10. So

in Josiah's days, but immediately after all goes to wreck. How could this be, but that real personal religion was still far off?

But on the other hand, family and personal reformation would make people duly concerned for obtaining truth and purity, and when they have, would cause the retaining and holding of it fast.

Use 1. This teaches us that there is no true national reformation without family or personal. In vain do we pretend to the one without the other. If a nation have never so much purity of truth and ordinances, God will never count them pure without reformation of life. Nay, the purity of ordinances will aggravate their condemnation. The more light, while little holiness in a church or nation, the more terrible will their judgment be. Laodicea's hypocrisy was her ruin, Rev. iii. 15. The church of Ephesus was very zealous against error, Rev. ii. 6. Discipline was vigorously exercised against the erroneous, verse 2. Yet alas! for all this she had lost the vigour of real holiness, therefore unless she speedily repented and returned to her first works she was to be visited with the heaviest judgments, verses 4, 5.

2. So many persons and families as there are in the land that will not reform, and amend their ways, so many hinderers there are of national reformation. O if these were considered, many would be found guilty of preventing national reformation, who now think themselves very far from being chargeable with it. Consider your own sins impartially, and remember that so far as you are deficient in personal holiness and reformation, so far you are guilty before God of hindering the reformation of the land. How is it the land should mourn? Is it not every family apart? While the house is on fire, you are chargeable with the ruin of it, so far as you bring not your bucket and cast it on the flame in the place nearest you.

3. Let none say they can do nothing towards a national reformation, for that is false. Every person can do something for it if they will. What we call our cannot, God calls our will not. His command is, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. But, says he, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." But it is not easy to get our corrupt hearts to comply with what God calls us to for that end.

The great thing some think they are to do for this end is to separate from the church. And this is very easy, because agreeable enough to corrupt nature in its passions and prejudices. Separation is very proper for Babylon that is never to be healed, Jer. li. 9. To separate from Zion's sins also is very proper; but to separate from her in her duties, and the service of God in God's own ordinances, is no mean of God's appointment to reform her of her sins,

Rev. ii. 24. compared with verse 20. It is true, church censures and the separation from the company of those, thereupon so cast out, is a mean for that end, 2 Thess. iii. 14. 1 Cor. v. 11—13. But what is all this to separating where there is no such casting out. What shall we do then when censure is neglected? Rev. ii. 34. Nay sirs, this mars reformation in congregations and through the whole church. (Alas, it is sad that offences so abound, there is a woe against them by whom they come, but a woe too against the world that is stumbled by them, and leave their duty because others leave theirs.) I am convinced the neglect of censure mars reformation in Scotland this day; for instead of making sinners ashamed, it irritates some, and sets them more against reformation than otherwise they would be; and sinks the hearts of others in the Lord's work, and will make their discharge the more easy whenever it comes: whereas would people keep their zeal for reformation and increase it, and not run out of our mother's house with it, it might do much good within the house, to warm those that are more coldrife, 2 Cor. xi. 2. I refer it to the consciences of the heart-lovers of holiness, whether in a time of snares in our mother's house, it be a more proper mean for resisting defection and advancing reformation to stay within and struggle for these ends, than to leave it without our help.

But God's way for national reformation is not so agreeable, but we must set about it. And that is, that every one in their own sphere set about reformation. What can we do? Reform yourselves and reform your families, and labour to spread it among them with whom you have access to converse. This your own eternal interest, and that of others, require of you; and it might be of good use to the church.

1. Set about personal reformation in heart and life. Thus we find, Nehemiah, chap. iii. that every one laboured in repairing the wall over against his own house. Though then you cannot repair the whole wall, yet will you not like them repair over against your own chamber. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God." Look into the house, you will see it stands much in need of purging. There are buyers and sellers within that heart of thine, that need to be driven out in the practice of mortification. Purge the outer court of thy life, thy words and actions. See well to the inner court, the hidden man of the heart.

2. Set about family reformation. Every Christian family is or should be a church in the house, 1 Cor. xvi. 19. In it true doctrine should be maintained and propagated by reading the word and instructing the members of the family. "These words, saith God,

which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Pure worship of prayers and praises. Holy discipline and good government, for the encouragement of piety, and suppressing of sin in the family, Psalm ci. And to the advancing of these, every one is to hold hand, as they would have the Lord to dwell in the family.

3. Help forward the reformation of other persons, families, and particularly of the congregation whereof you are members. It is the commendation of the Tekoites, Neh. iii. 5—27. It seems they were resolved not to be idle, while any thing was to do. They had less encouragement than others from their nobles, but they were not the more slack. Every one is our neighbour, and we have a relation to all, to engage us to be useful to them as far as we can. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith." Thus you may be useful for national reformation and that two ways.

1. Thus doing, that part of it falling to your share is done, and so it is not all lying behind. God will take notice who puts his hand to the work as well as who stand back from it. Nay he notices how every one works, Neh. iii. 20. Your labour shall not be in vain. God reckons a Christian who repents of all his known sins, to repent of all his sins without exception; and he that doth what he can towards national reformation in his sphere, will be reckoned of God, one that would have reformed the whole land if he could.

2. Your example will have a native tendency to stir up others. The flame that burns the house must rise in some place, and some person must take the lead in reformation. And O! but that is an honourable post. Paul speaks most affectionately of Epinetus, as being the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ; and tells us that the zeal of the Corinthians provoked very many. When the first fruits come, the whole harvest follows. Though it should not have that effect, yet it will be your best testimony against your defection and apostacy of the day.

To excite you to family and personal reformation, Consider,

1. This is very necessary at all times, especially at this time in which God is pleading with us in such a manner, many families mourning for the loss of their relations, and we know not how soon the cup may come about to our own persons, if the Lord do not stay his hand.

It is an ordinary excuse for doing nothing that we cannot do all;

but it is a very insufficient one. In Ezra's days, the building of the temple was interrupted for many years; yet they built the altar, Ezra iii. 2. Though we cannot reform the land; we may do something towards it.

Though you cannot stop the flood of iniquity and apostacy through the land; yet you may put a stop to that part of it that is in your own course and life. You might do something to stop it in those of the same family with you and in your neighbourhood. Ay, but as are the nobles, so are the commons, they will not put their shoulder to the Lord's work. They are not their brother's keepers; though they can speak well enough in their own cause, they have not a mouth to open for the cause of God. We are all persuaded public oaths have done much mischief to this church and nation. This we cannot help, but may we not reform the common profane swearing among us, that no person imposes. They have need of a brow of brass, that will pretend a zeal against the former, and yet make no obstacle of profane swearing in their own conversation, or are at no pains to reform it in others.

Though we cannot get the land to mourn, yet we may mourn over our own family and its case. Though matters be so that we cannot get national humiliations, for all that we judge to be sins of the land, yet we may get personal and family fasts and humiliations for them. In these we may be as particular as we please. And if they put us to this course, it would be a good evidence, that the sins of the land are really heavy to us before the Lord; and that the sins of the land are not a matter of discourse, but of solemn seriousness with us. Amen.

Note. The remainder of this subject, on personal and family fasting was published by the author himself, in his Treatise on that subject.

Ettrick, Sept. 18, 1717.

THANKSGIVING FOR MY CONTINUANCE IN ETTRICK.

SERMON XXVII.

PROVERBS xxix.

Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

WE are called this day to give thanks unto God, that the congregation is not left desolate, and wanting a settled ministry. The due consideration of the evils attending such a case is a proper mean to excite unto thankfulness, for averting such a stroke. And where thankfulness is to be found in its due latitude, it will extend to a suitable improvement of the means of grace. But of these we have in the text, where notice,

1. What makes a people very unhappy, with respect to the concerns of their souls. Where there is no vision the people perish The want of vision puts a people in very unhappy circumstances. By vision is understood prophecy, 1 Sam. ix. 9. "Before time in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet, was before time called a seer." And by prophecy is meant the preaching, expounding, and applying the word of God, 1 Cor. xiv. 1. "Desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophecy." This also is clear from the opposite clause, which mentions the law, as the rule by which people are to walk. They that are left without this mercy of the word, they perish, their spiritual case goes to wreck, they are made naked, stripped of their ornaments.

2. What makes a people or person happy. He that keepeth the law, happy is he. Negatively, you may observe, it is not the having of vision, the enjoying the ministry of the word that will do it. Though the want of it makes a people unhappy, however prosperous they may be otherwise; yet the mere having of it will not make them happy. Positively, it is the improving of vision among them, to the obeying of the truth, it is the keeping of the law which is preached unto them, the falling in with the great ends of the revelation of the mind of God made among them, by faith and a holy walk. This makes every one happy that doeth it.

Doctrine. Though the want of the ministry of the word makes a people very unhappy, yet it is not the having of it, but the right improving of it that makes them happy.

There are three things which the text presents to us, and which crave our serious consideration in our case.

I. Deplorable is the case of those that are deprived of the ministry of the word.

II. The mere having of the ministry of the word is not sufficient to make a people happy.

III. A right improvement of the ministry of the word will make a happy people.

We return to the consideration of the

I. Namely, deplorable is the case of those that are deprived of the ministry of the word. In speaking to this, I shall first show what makes that case so deplorable and heavy; and then confirm the truth of this point. Let us then,

1. Show what makes that case so deplorable and heavy. The text tells us the people perish. The original word here used has several significations, which different translations give it, and I see no reason why each of them that is suitable may not be thought to be intended by the Holy Spirit, and the whole make up the just explication of what makes that case so deplorable.

1. Where there is no ministry of the word, the people are made naked, they are left in a bare condition, they are uncovered. This is the primary condition of the word. Thus the sad condition of the people by their idolatry is expressed, Exod. xxii. 25. Moses saw that the people were naked, for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame amongst their enemies. And,

1. They are stript of their ornaments to their shame. Gospel ordinances kept up by a gospel ministry are the ornaments of a house, Isa. lxiv. 11. The ordinances are the beauties of holiness, Psal. cx. 3. Thus the saints have ever considered them, Psal. lxxxiv. 1. Where there is no ministry of the word, there the stars, which Christ holds in his right hand to give light to the people, are hid out of sight; the candles that shined in the candlestick are put out, and so such a people stript of their ornaments.

2. They are stripped of their armour, left naked in the midst of danger. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. We cannot want it in an evil hour, if we mind to strive against the stream. It is true, the word read is the sword of the Spirit as well as preached. But the preaching of it is the special mean to draw it out of the scabbard, and put it into the hand of poor sinners against their enemies. Thus the Eunuch, after reading the word, replied to Philip's question, How can I understand it, except some man should guide me? And he desired that Philip do come up and sit with him for

that purpose. The well is deep, and there is need of some to draw for the people, that they may drink.

3. They are stript of the means of their defence. Sinners are in danger of attacks from enemies on all hands. They have need of watchmen to stand in the watch-tower, but where there is no ministry the watch-tower is empty, none to sound the trumpet to awaken those that are asleep, and to encourage those to fight that go out to the battle. The wall is then taken down, and what is within will appear like the garden of the sluggard.

Hence they are exposed in a special manner to the subtilty and violence of their spiritual enemies, without the ordinary means of help. They that let their case go as it will, it is much alike to them, whether they have the ministry of the word or not. But such as are concerned about their souls, will find they need all the help they can get from public ordinances: so that they will look upon themselves without them, to be exposed as sheep without a shepherd.

2. Where there is no vision, the people go backward. They leave their first love, their first ways in religion, they fall into a spiritual decay and apostacy. God hath appointed the ministry of the word to set people forward in the way of duty, and in that they must strive against the stream. No wonder then that as the boat must go down the stream, when the rowers are no more; so where there is no vision the people go backward. And this is one reason why Satan strives to rob the church of her ministers. What is said to the seven churches, is said to the angels of them, for a lively minister, is most likely to make a lively people; a dead minister, a dead people; and no ministry at all, would soon issue in no religion at all.

3. Where there is no vision, the people are drawn away. They are drawn away from their God, from their duty, from the right way. They are never wanting who will be agents for Satan, to draw people aside into the ways of sin and wickedness. We have many such drawers, the devil, the world, and the flesh. Now to draw against and oppose all these, a gospel ministry is set up in the church. All hath enough to do, to draw people forward; but how much more easily then would people be drawn away, were there none such to hold. Thus are they drawn away and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd.

4. Where there is no vision, the people are idle, they give over their work. They are like children who go to their play when they have none to call them to their books. They stand idle in the market place, while they have none to invite them to go into the

vineyard; to tell them what to work and how to work. There is a principle of sloth in the sons of men; they need monitors to stir them up to their business, to deal with their consciences, to put them on.

Lastly, Where there is no vision, the people perish, they die for lack of instruction, are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Good motions once raised in them are weakened and extinguished, and the case of their souls goes to wreck. Let us now,

II. Confirm the truth of this point.

1. The depriving of a people of the ministry of the word is a stroke of the Lord's anger. It is threatened as such, when he says, "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." It is inflicted as such. "But go ye now, says he, unto my place which is in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel." It is a spiritual stroke and therefore the more heavy. It concerns men's souls, and therefore makes the case deplorable. It is a stroke laid on for a grievous quarrel, namely, the misimproving of the gospel.

2. The right notion of the excellency of the ministry of the word will evince their case to be sad that want it. Ministers are the light of the world, and they are dark places of the earth that want the gospel. The ministry of the word is the ordinary means of convincing and converting sinners; and when the gospel goes from a place, it is a sad sign that that work there is near an end. It is appointed for the edifying of the body of Christ, therefore to be continued till the temple be finished. The word is the bread of our souls the water to quench their thirst, rain to make them fruitful; and it is our counsellor in doubts and fears.

Use 1. Let us pity the case of those that are altogether without the light of the gospel, as many places in the world are. What though they have many precious things which we want, yet our gospel is better than their gold. Whatever they have in this world, where is the solid grounds of hope with them of a better? For our text looks sternly on the opinion of the salvation of heathens, telling us that where no vision is, there the people perish.

2. Let us pity the case of persecuted Christians and churches. Where there is no open vision, where silent Sabbaths are forced upon professors by the rage of enemies. As also the case of desolate congregations amongst ourselves, where many are perishing for want of vision, being brought up in ignorance of the precepts of religion, and have not the means of instruction, direction and comfort, when they most need them. Did men consider the sad case

into which the want of vision brings a people, they durst not raise obstacles in the way of planting congregations. Though in the mean time we have reason to bless God, that our land is a land of light, and if the ministry of the word be wanting in one corner. it may be had in another.

3. How injurious are they to their own souls, that wilfully slight the ministry of the word, whom a very little thing will keep back from ordinances. How do they wrong themselves that quite turn their backs on the ministry, and make it religion to them, not to be present at the ordinances dispensed in the congregation. The experience of such whose souls are helped thereby in their Christian course, will witness their sin, and the injury done to themselves, as well as to the ordinances.

Lastly, Let us be thankful to God, for the late favourable event in keeping this congregation from the desolation that was intended. There are few places that could have worse borne a desolation; there being in our case several things not common to render a desolation heavy. The Lord hath heard prayer, let us render to him the calves of our lips. We proceed now to show,

II. That the mere having of the ministry of the word is not sufficient to make a people happy. This is evident if we consider,

1. That people may have it, and yet get no saving benefit by it. It may be to them like a sounding brass, that reaches no farther than the ear. We find people going on in horrible profanity, notwithstanding they enjoyed the means of grace, Jer. vii. 8, 9. Some again sink into formality. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Outward privileges make no man a happy man. What avails the light if men will not open their eyes to see: our food will not nourish us, unless we eat and digest it; nor clothes warm us, unless we put them on; so the word preached did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

2. The mere having of the word is so far from saving men, that it will aggravate the condemnation of those that have it, and walk not answerably to it. It will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Capernaum; for them that never heard the gospel, than for unbelieving ungodly men. The brighter the light shines among a people, their works of darkness are the more heinous: and their outward privileges will be to them at length like a bag of gold on a drowning man.

Use. You my brethren have shown on the late occasion a great concern to have the ministry continued among you, and I hope you are convinced that the design pursued was very unacceptable to me. Now providence has turned this matter according to the desire of us

both. But let us not sit down upon it, as if that were enough to make all well with us in the relation of pastor and people. We need the Lord's hand to it, to put efficacy in the mercy for the good of us both. Many have got their desire; but it has turned to an empty husk in their hand, because they did not look to the Lord, and depend upon him for the good of it. "Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it: Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house." If the Lord be not with us to bless us, we may come to be a weary burden to one another, for no creature can be more to us than God makes it to be. We need the blessing to make the ordinances effectual among us; for Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. O! pray, pray for the blessing on this continuance. —Protest before the Lord that you will not be satisfied without it. We need the blessing to make the mercy lasting, for an unblessed mercy will either be very comfortless, or else it will not continue long.

It remains for us to shew,

III. That a right improvement of the mercy of the word will make a happy people. This improvement consists in two things, which come both here, under the notion of keeping the law.

1. Faith in Jesus Christ. It was to him the ceremonial law pointed the sinner, under the Old Testament; and without faith there is no keeping of the moral law. For in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, the apostle shows us, that it was by faith that the Old Testament saints did perform duties and bear trials and crosses. —This is the great call of the gospel; to close with Christ there offered. We are sent to espouse you to our Master's Son, and do not come speed, but by gaining your consent.

2. Holiness of life. The doctrines of the gospel believed with the heart, teach us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. As Christ is the end of the law, so I may say, the law is the end of the gospel; for it is the great design of the gospel revelation, to bring back sinners, to that righteousness and holiness which the law requires. The gospel never gains its end among a people, till a strain of piety and holiness run through their whole lives.

Now to confirm this point. Consider,

1. This improvement will make happy souls here, and hereafter. Here in peace with God, pardon of sin, yea, all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; and hereafter in eternal salvation. For he that believeth shall be saved.

2. It bids fair for prosperity in earthly things, and as far as it will serve for God's glory and your good, will secure it to you. "For godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come."

3. It will give happiness under your crosses and trials with which you meet in the world. Troubles in the world will make the saints more attentive to the word; and they will find the word lighten, yea, sweeten their burdens.

Lastly, It will put a happiness into the relations in which we stand, for religion is the grand cement of society, and makes it most comfortable. The corruptions of men make them hurtful to one another, and this would cure them; under the enlightening and purifying influence of the gospel, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

Directions For improving the ministry of the word.

1. Pray much for a real benefit from ordinances; brethren, pray for us.

2. Diligently attend upon ordinances.

3. Meditate upon what you hear, and converse with one another about it.

4. Set yourselves humbly to obey the truths delivered from the Lord's word, embracing them by faith.

5. Put your hand to the Lord's work in your several stations in your families, and among those with whom you converse to prosecute the great ends of the gospel.

Lastly, Let us live in love and unity; and as ever you would see the gospel do good in the place, beware of division, for unhappy is that minister and people between whom it creeps in, and little success or comfort can there be where it prevails. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

National Fast Day, July 7, 1726.

UNFRUITFUL PROFESSORS CUT DOWN AS CUMBERERS OF THE GROUND.

SERMON XXVIII.

LUKE xiii. 7.

Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?

WE have here the doom of the unfruitful fig tree, and in it the doom of all such as are utterly barren, under the enjoyment of the gospel. And here let us consider, that the fig tree is the Jews, to them it first looks; though no doubt it is designed for hearers of the gospel in all ages. The vineyard is not mankind in general; for the far greater part of mankind were, and yet are, left without the inclosure; but it is the church as having the means of grace. See Isaiah chap. v. The owner of the vineyard is Christ himself. He is the heir of all things, the head of the church in particular, and he came seeking the fruit. The coming and seeking the fruit imports the Lord's taking notice what use sinners make of the means of grace; how they answer the design of the pains and cost bestowed on them. The finding none, imports the barrenness of sinners, particularly of the Jews, under the means of grace; not brought to faith and repentance. The dress of the vineyard is his apostles and ministers. The three years mentioned, may refer to the three years of Christ's ministry: or if that doth not so well agree, since they were after that spared, not one year only, but forty, it may be taken more generally for the whole time of the Jewish church under the prophets, John the Baptist, and Christ himself; fig trees if they are not hopeless, bringing forth in three years' time at least. So it denotes the great patience exercised towards the Jews, and the hopelessness of their case, notwithstanding all the means and time which they have enjoyed. In the text we have,

1. The orders given respecting it, *Cut it down.* The case is hopeless. The pruning knife prevails not, take the axe and hew it down. This was accomplished in the destruction of Jerusalem, when the people were unchurched and destroyed.

2. The reason of this severity. *It cumbers the ground.* The ground in which it stands is rendered useless. It draws to it the sap that might nourish other plants, and its shade is hurtful to men. So the barren Jews were to be removed.

Doctrine. The unfruitful under the means of grace do but cumber the ground in God's vineyard, and therefore however they may be spared a while, they will be cut down at length. Here I shall shew,

I. Who are the unfruitful in God's vineyard to be cut down.

II. How and in what respects do these cumber the ground.

III. Why the cumberers of the ground are so long spared.

IV. The import of cutting down. We are then,

I. To shew who are the unfruitful in God's vineyard, to be cut down.

1. Dead trees. They being still in their natural state, are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. The gospel is the mean of life to a dead world, called therefore the word of life, Phil. ii. 16. It is by it that the Spirit of life is conveyed into the dead soul. This Spirit is received by the hearing of faith. Thereby faith comes whereby the soul is united to Christ the fountain of life. So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. But alas! many continue dead under quickening means, destitute of the Spirit and of faith. So they cannot bring forth the fruits of holiness, they can do nothing that is truly good, more than a dead man can move and act. There is none that doth good, no not one. They are not brought to union with Christ, so death reigns in them. Thus there are dead persons, dead families.

2. Rotten trees. Dead souls are spiritually rotten also. "They are altogether become filthy." This speaks reigning vanity and worthlessness, as the rotten tree is light. How many such are in God's vineyard, whose mind is vain. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Their conversation is vain, 1 Pet. i. 18. They savour nothing, seek nothing in earnest, but the vain things of a present world. This also speaks vileness. They are loathsome to God, and to good men, and useless. Good for nothing but the fire. These will be cut down.

3. Withered trees. When the tree has lost all sap and is withered away, it cannot bring forth fruit, but must be cut down. Many that sometimes looked green and promising under the means of grace, have lost all now. Their convictions are stifled, their affection to the things of God is gone, and the gospel is become tasteless to them.

4. Barren trees, that have leaves but no fruit. "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree that beareth not fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Many have

the leaves of a profession, but no conversation agreeable thereto. A form of godliness but nothing of the power. As Naphtali, giving goodly words, but not as Joseph, fruitful boughs. But it is fruit, and not leaves that will save from the axe.

Lastly, Degenerate trees bringing forth evil and noxious fruit. To such God says, "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" These bring forth the fruits of the flesh in abundance, that are deadly like the wild gourds of the wild vine. For those that are barren to God, are always fruitful to the devil. So may it be said of very many hearers of the gospel. "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom; and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall; their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." We are now to shew,

II. How and in what respects do these cumber the ground in the vineyard.

1. They take up room, precious room, that might be better occupied. If Tyre and Sidon had enjoyed the room of Chorazin and Bethsaida, they would have made a profitable use of it, Matth. xi. 21. A place in God's vineyard is very precious. It is more valuable than ten thousand times as much without it. "For says David, a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." But this desirable and valuable situation often falls into the hands of many, who know no more to improve it, than the cock in the fable to improve the Jewel. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it." All they do with it at best, is but unprofitably to fill up a space.

2. There is no advantage to the owner from that part of the ground which they occupy. But surely from it as well as from the other parts, he might raise advantage to himself, if they were removed from it. They are together become unprofitable. They are useless for God, they contribute nothing for his declarative glory in the world, they do nothing to advance the Mediator's kingdom. When he cut down the Jews, and planted the Gentiles in their room; he showed what great gain was to be made of that place in his vineyard, which the Jews occupied to no purpose. "From the uttermost part of the earth; have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous: but I said my leanness, my leanness, woe unto me." So God might raise glory to himself, which he hath not from us, by giving to others our places and privileges, if we were turned out.

3. There is no comfort to the vine-dressers from that part of the ground such occupy, though otherwise much might arise from it, if it was planted with other trees. The pains of the labourers is lost upon such trees. In vain is all their toil, sweat, and strength bestowed on them; "for say they, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of our Lord revealed." They have all the sorrow and pain of disappointment and lost labour: though their labour might have come to a comfortable and profitable account if it had been bestowed on others. Thus said God to Ezekiel, "I have not sent thee to many people of a strange speech, and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand: surely had I sent thee to them, they would have harkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard hearted." Thus we see that Jonah's mission to Nineveh was successful.

4. The sap of the ground which barren trees draw to them, of which they are yet nothing the better, might nourish fruitful trees if they had their room. Sodom's ruin might have been prevented by Caparnaum's privileges; but they were lost on Capernaum, Matth. xi. 23. Many hungry persons might be refreshed with the meat and drink which the glutton and the drunkard devour, and from which they derive no good but evil to themselves: and many a poor soul would feed sweetly on these means of grace, that others have and despise, having no heart for them. The salvation of many might be advanced by those very means of grace which others having yet got no good of them, but an aggravating of their condemnation.

Lastly, They hinder the fruitfulness of other trees in the vineyard; drawing the sap from them. So they are not only not profitable, but hurtful. Look how a barren tree in a garden spoils the undergrowth, and is hurtful to the fruit trees. So unprofitable hearers of the gospel, scatter their malignant influence to all that are about them. One sinner destroyeth much good. Their example and influence will pull down, what the means of grace are for building up in others. Let us now,

III. Inquire why cumberers of the ground are spared so long.

1. For to try if they will mend. "The Lord is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." A tree that is barren one year may be fruitful another year. The soul that has long refused to obey the call of Christ, may afterwards, with the son in the parable,

repent and obey, Matth. xxi. 29. And therefore the Lord will give them time, exercise patience, and wait on a while.

2. For the prayers of the godly. This barren tree was spared another year, upon the entreaty made for it by the vine-dresser, verse 8. So was the intercession made by Moses prevalent for the sparing of Israel, Exod. xxxii. 10—14. and Lot's intercession for Zoar. The godly are the pillars of the land.

3. For the sake of their seed designed for vessels of mercy. Though a barren tree brings not forth fruit, yet it brings forth seed for propagating its kind. And many a time sinners, vessels of wrath, are spared, for the sake of the vessels of mercy that may be in their loins; as it was with the generation that came out of Egypt, and the remnant of the Jewish unbelievers, Matth. xxiv. 22.

Lastly, That impenitent sinners may be wholly inexcusable. There is a measure of iniquity to be filled up, and so long the Lord will bear with sinners, and no longer, Rom. ii. 5. Gen. xv. 16. It remains,

IV. To consider the import of cutting down. It denotes,

1. Patience at a end. "And the Lord said, my Spirit shall not always strive with men." God may wait long on barren trees in his vineyard, but the time will come that he will wait no longer. He will no longer expect fruit; it must be cut down. I have long time, says he, holden my peace, I have been still and refrained myself, now will I cry like a travailing woman; "I will destroy and devour at once." His honour lies at stake, the honour of his holy and just providence, which suffers by sinners continuing impenitent. But he will retrieve his honour at the sinner's cost.

2. Never fruit more to grow upon them. When our Lord said to the barren tree, "Let not fruit grow upon thee henceforward for ever." It is added, "And presently the fig tree withered away." While the tree stands there is some hope, but when it is cut down all hope of fruit is removed from it for ever. Men delay repentance now, but this stroke will put them out of the reach of repentance, beyond the line of mercy.

3. It denotes the sharpness of the stroke. The stroke of wrath against barren trees in God's vineyard will be very cutting. The dead soul will be made to feel it in the most tender part. Whom the word cannot pierce, the sword of wrath will cut asunder and appoint them their portion with the hypocrites; "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

4. The suddenness of the stroke. "The Lord of the slothful servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware; and shall cut him asunder." Of all

persons those who have most pains taken on them in vain, by the preaching of the gospel, are the most liable to sudden destruction. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

5. The destructiveness of it. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." The Lord cuts in mercy that he may heal; but his cutting down makes an end of the barren tree. So will death be to impenitent sinners.

6. The casting of it out of the vineyard. The tree being cut down, is next cast over the hedge. They that improve not their room in God's vineyard, will ere long lose their room in it, and their souls at once.

Lastly, That the barren tree is to be cast into the fire. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and they are cast into the fire, and they are burned." Impenitent sinners cast out of God's vineyard, will be cast into hell, where they will for ever lament their misimproving of the means of grace when it will be out of time.

Uses.—1. The unfruitfulness under the gospel prevailing in our land, forbodes a time of hewing and cutting down. Our privileges have been signal ones, our misimprovement signal; so will our stroke be likewise.

2. Impenitent sinners have a dangerous station in God's vineyard. A barren tree may be much safer in the wood than in the garden. Tyre and Sidon will have a cheaper bargain of their lusts, than Chorazin and Bethsaida; and they that never heard the gospel, than we.

3. Take heed what part ye act in God's vineyard. Be concerned to know for what use you are in it. Beware of being cumberers of the ground. Many such there are, but he will at length free his vineyard of the burden of them.

4. Lay no more weight upon external church privileges, than they will bear. Happy are they that dwell in God's house, if they learn the true manners of the house. But if in God's house they live ungodly lives, it had been better for them they never had known it. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Lastly, Consider what fruit ye bring forth under the means of grace; and do not overlook the privileges which you enjoy. Ministers sow the seed, Christ himself will look after the fruit, and will notice who bring forth the fruit of a preached gospel, and who cumber the ground. "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Amen.

Morbattle, Saturday before the Sacrament, June, 1707.

THE GREAT DESIRE OF THE SAINTS.

SERMON XXIX.

PSALM iv. 6.

Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

HOWEVER all men have the same common nature, yet grace makes a vast difference among them. As it makes difference in their understandings, so, in their wills. Their choice is not the same, but very different as in the text.

In this verse we have the world divided into two parties. On the one side which is the worst, there are many, on the other side not many. Many is a word of comparison, and properly signifies a great number, and because there are degrees in a great number, sometimes it signifies all, Rom. v. 19. Sometimes the most part, Matth. vii. 13. so here. Wherefore those on the other side must be few. So that if it were put to the vote in the world, whether God or the world should have men's hearts, God should be voted out of the world. We have also in the verse something supposed in which the parties agree, and that is in two things. 1. They agree in their sense of defects. Every man godly and ungodly is sensible he labours under some wants. The wicked man in the fulness of his sufficiency is in straits, there is still a void in his heart, even after he hath glutted himself with all he can find in the world. His heart is like the grave, or the barren womb, that never say it is enough. The godly also while here, are still craving, being compassed with wants. 2. They agree in their desire of supplies. The mouths of both are opened, they gape for satisfaction as the parched ground for the rain. The desire of happiness is interwoven with man's nature, and that desire is fresh, even when desire fails in old age.

But there are also some things in which they differ, and these are,

1. The object of their desires. The wicked's desire is creeping, the godly's desire soars aloft; the one desires any good, that is worldly good things, verse 7. like the wild beasts that seek their meat among their feet: but the godly desires the light of God's countenance, that is the favour and sense thereof. The reason of the metaphor is, because the affections of the heart appear in the countenance. The weary traveller does not so much desire the ris-

ing of the sun, as the gracious soul does the light of God's countenance, Psal. lxvii. 1.

5. They differ in the way which they take to the accomplishing of their desires. The wicked are at a great uncertainty here, *who will shew us?* That is, make us to enjoy. The godly are at a point, they go straight to God with their desires. Carnal men know not what quarter to go to, but try all, like the hungry infant that sucks wherever it comes, and finding no milk in one thing, goes to another, and so on. But the child of God straightway fixes on the breasts of divine consolation. "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."

3. In the success of their desires. The carnal man gets not his desire satisfied. He is still saying, who will show us any good, for he is always at the wrong door; but the gracious soul gets its rest taken up in the bosom of the great God. Here it lays itself down and goes no farther. The carnal man is like a traveller that has lost his way in a misty day, when he sees a bush he takes it for a house and promiseth himself rest, but finding he is disappointed there, gets up again and falls into the same mistake, and is disappointed without end. Whereas the godly come to the right door, and continue there till it be opened.

Doctrine. It is the great desire of gracious souls to have the light of the Lord's countenance lifted up upon them. I shall,

I. Speak to the case that is here supposed.

II. Consider this desire of the gracious soul.

III. Give the reasons, why it is the great desire of the gracious soul. I am then,

I. To speak to the case that is here supposed, which is, that the the saint, the child of light, may sometimes sit in darkness. Hence saith Isaiah, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light." The sun may go down upon the saint in his way to Immanuel's land, a black cloud may overshadow him, and set him down in the valley of the shadow of death, where he may be left to cry for the light to arise upon him. Here I shall first show how far this darkness may proceed with them. And secondly, How can these things be.

First then, How far may this darkness proceed with them.

1. It may go so far with them, that they cannot see to read their evidences for heaven. Sometimes the believer can say My Beloved is mine, and I am his. But when the light of God's countenance goes down on them, they may cry out, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." So that the harps employed formerly

to sing the songs of the Redeemer are hanged upon the willows, because they are now by the rivers of Babel and cannot sing the songs of Zion.

2. That they cannot see above them, nor look up to heaven. Thus the publican would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* They may lose their confidence with God, who sometimes could by an eye of faith pierce the clouds, and come boldly before the throne of grace. They may go to God, but they are under the feet of a diffidence, discouragement and heartlessness.

3. The very thing that was their light before may be as darkness unto them. The word of God that was their lamp, the joy and rejoicing of their heart before, may become gloomy and dark; yea, and be turned into terror to them. "I remembered God, says Asaph, and was troubled, I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed." Men are very liable to misapprehensions in the dark, hence an angel with a flaming sword seems to them to guard the tree of life. On its fruit they have sometimes sweetly feasted, but the door of Christ's banqueting house seems now closed; the blunted edge of the threatenings now appears sharp and piercing. Bid them lay hold on a promise, that is to them, like God's commanding Moses to take the serpent by the tail, though sometimes it has been the rod of God in their hands.

4. They may be unable to discern their best friend from their foe: even as the disciples, when they saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, *it is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.* Sometimes the Lord is coming to cure them, and they think he is coming to kill them. Hence the soul is filled with fears, and doubts, and jealousies of Christ, why it is dark, the sun is gone down, and they can see nothing but blood through a dark cloud.

5. The darkness may be such that they may lose sight of their guide; and what a weary case must this be. Sometimes a child of God may be within view of Christ, and a cloud may come and take him out of their sight. Hence Zion is heard to complain, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Like Heman they think they are remembered by him no more, and are cut off from his hand. Hence they are left sometimes to spend a little time saying, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? For ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?"

6. They may lose sight of their way-marks, and be filled with such confusion and perplexity, that they know not what to do or what way to direct their course, and thus *be shut up, that they cannot come forth.* Former experiences are the believers way-marks in

a dark hour, and sometimes they serve to guide their feet in a dark place. They remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. But sometimes the darkness is so great, that they can get no help of them, Psal. cxliii. 5—8.

7. The darkness may be such that they may quite sit up for a time, and give over duty, as in the thick darkness of Egypt, Exod. x. 23. The darkness may fetter their tongues, Psal. lxxvii. 4. and restrain prayer, Song ii. 14. Either they cannot pray though they would, or they may think it is vain to seek the Lord any more, or that they will but bring more wrath upon themselves.

8. It may be so thick that no ray of light can pierce it, till the sun arise and dispel the cloud. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran by night, and ceased not; my soul refused to be comforted." Discouragement beats back as a brazen wall, all comfort offered to the soul, being like Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they were not. The disease may be so violent, that ministers and Christians may apply suitable remedies, but all the world cannot cause them take effect, till the Lord himself put to his hand.

Lastly, They may be weary of their very lives. "My soul, says Job, is weary of my life: I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul." Hence their very bodies may be neglected and the necessary comforts of life refused. "My heart is smitten, and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread," like Paul's company in the ship, Acts xxvii. 20, 21. And hence a longing for death, Job iii. 20, 21. Sometimes this darkness comes on suddenly, Jer. xx. 13, 14. Sometimes it creeps on by degrees as on Samson. Let us, secondly,

Shew how can these things be.

1. It arises from our corruptions, these cast up mists that intercept the light, the light of the Lord's countenance, they grieve the Spirit of Christ, Eph. iv. 30. When we are well we cannot keep ourselves so. It is difficult to carry a full cup even. Our unwatchfulness, quenching the Spirit, slighting occasions of communion with God, and neglecting means of improvement, bring us into darkness.

2. God will have a difference betwixt the place of the believer's pilgrimage and his eternal home. It is peculiar to Immanuel's land to have no night there, Rev. xxi. 25. And sovereignty challenges a latitude, and will have some in darkness, while others are in light. We are now,

II. To speak of this desire of the gracious soul. And

First, What is it to have the light of the Lord's countenance.

1. It implies a state of reconciliation with God. There is an en-

mity betwixt God and every man by nature. Hence angry words and angry looks, that sometimes look the stoutest sinners out of countenance, spoils their mirth, and makes the wheels of their hearts drive heavily. This enmity is taken away, and the soul enjoys peace with God through Christ, Eph. ii. 14. The flames of wrath are extinguished by the blood of the Lamb. Thus the darkness of a natural state is over, and the true light is come. The sun of righteousness is risen to the believer. They who were sometimes darkness are now light in the Lord. They are all the children of the light and of the day.

2. It implies something more, and that is the Lord's laying aside any special controversy with the soul. Though there is never a breach betwixt God and a gracious soul in respect of its state, yet often in respect of the frame of the soul. Though the sun be up, yet a cloud may overshadow it. Now the Lord may frown on his own people, and sin is that cloud. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." Now when the light of the Lord's countenance is lifted, the soul may say, "The voice of my Beloved! behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."

3. It implies a communication of gracious influences and an intimation of God's love to the soul. Then the soul is lifted up when the Lord's favour is discerned, and the soul can say with Paul, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Sometimes Christ says to the gracious soul, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." It is his voice and they doubt not of it; for this light when it shines so brightly dispels doubts and fears, and like the sun is seen by its own light. The Spirit attests the truth of the word and of the work of grace in the soul. And by this light of the Lord's countenance, the soul can look far back to that blessed hour when the Father and the Son were engaged in making the covenant of redemption, and see itself given to Christ by the Father, and its redemption undertaken by the Son, this in the fulness of time performed and in the time of love begun.

It can also look forward "even to the land that is afar off, to the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." This light will let them see through the clouds, and behold the many mansions in the Father's house. It will let them see how far eternity of blessedness goes, when the saints shall be ever with the Lord. And though mountains of sin be in their way home, this light will let them see over them. "Iniquities prevail against me, as for our

transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." This light lets them see a fulness of merit in him to take away the guilt of sin, and a fulness of the Spirit, to take away the stains, dominion and indwelling power of sin. Let us now,

Secondly, Show they desire it.

1. They desire it above all. This is the chief desire of their souls. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." All other things are in their esteem but loss and dung, in comparison of this. The world is but a bulky vanity and fair nothing in their eyes. If they had but one choice to make, one petition to put up, it would be this.

2. They desire it so as they would be content with it, instead of all. Carnal men may desire the favour of God, and the love of Christ; but they see not such fulness in Christ, as to be content with him alone. But the gracious soul longing for this, would think itself happy in the enjoyment of it, though it should be stripped naked of all other comforts, and all the world should look down upon it, Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

They have good reasons for thus desiring the light of the Lord's countenance. Their life lies in his favour. "For his anger endureth but for a moment; in his favour is life." Their comfort depends on the light of his countenance. What a melancholy life would the world have without the light of the sun? So would the Christian be without the light of his Father's countenance. His frowns are bitter as death to the gracious soul.

Use 1. Of Exhortation. Let this be the desire of your souls, that the Lord may lift up the light of his countenance upon you. Seek this and make it your choice.

Motive 1. You cannot otherwise give evidence that you are in a gracious state. If this be not the great desire of your souls, you are on the same side with the world. If God be your Father, you will prize the light of his countenance. Can a child be satisfied though he had the countenance of all the servants about the house, if he have not his father's?

2. It will be but a heavy communion you will have of it, if the Lord lift not up the light of his countenance upon you; if you be not in a state of favour with God, you will but wound your own souls more; if there be a standing controversy still betwixt God and you, you can have no communion with him. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" It is sad to be at Jerusalem and not see the King's face.

3. The Lord will not refuse it, if you be heartily concerned for it. He offers you his favour and grace, Jer. iii. 1—22.

Direction 1. Lay hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ, Isa. xxvii. 5. Wash in his blood, Heb. ix. 14. Look to God through the vail of the flesh of Christ. God is a consuming fire. There is fire in his countenance against sinners as they are in themselves, but Christ is as a crystal wall betwixt God and the sinner, through him the light of the fire may come to refresh, but not the flame to burn.

2. Turn from your sins that have provoked him to turn his face from you, Isa. lxix. 2. See that there be no unrepented of lust to stand betwixt God and your souls, Psal. lxvi. 18. If you would have his favour, let these go away. Break your league with your sins, and say with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Amen.

Monday's Sermon, Morbattle, June, 1707.

[The same subject continued.]

THE GREAT DESIRE OF THE SAINTS.

SERMON XXX.

PSALM iv. 7.

Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

Use 2. Of reproof to, and lamentation over those who sit in woful darkness, and have not had the light of the Lord's countenance in any measure lifted up on them, and yet are not affected with it, they are not earnestly desiring it, and pressing after it. If they would speak their minds, they dare not say the great desire of their soul is this, "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."

In managing this, I shall

First, Shew you how that this is not the great desire of the souls of many. Secondly, How it comes to pass, that this is not their great desire; and Thirdly, The lamentable nature of this case. I am then,

I. To show you that this is not the great desire of the souls of many. It appears if you consider,

1. That ardent desire that there is in many after the world, and their lusts. "Who, say they, will shew us any good?" They are mad upon their idols. This desire is natural to us, and also it has never been quenched in many to this day. How then can this be

the great desire of their souls. They may as easily bring together the two poles as reconcile these. "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him."

2. The peaceable life that many have without the favour of God, or the least true ground of hope of it. Are there not many of whom it is true, *God is not in all their thoughts.* "They reign as kings without him," Jer. ii. 31. While others are looking heavenwards, they do contentedly look still downwards to the earth. Many can sleep in a sound skin, and never once examine whether they be in a state of friendship with God or not.

3. The easy life that many professors have of it, their rest being never interrupted, but when at any time they fall into gross and scandalous sins. There are many who, like children, can with pleasure wallow among the sand as long as it holds out of their eyes. They are not concerned for the light of the Lord's countenance. It is a light easily overclouded, and so will require great watchfulness to keep it up, and when iniquity prevails to take it away it will disturb the quiet of the gracious soul. *Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled.*

4. Persons contenting themselves with the bare performance of duties without finding God in them. Many go with Mary to an empty sepulchre, but few with her come away weeping. They are narrow souls, they seek little and get as little; bread and wine, but no Christ. They never come into the inner court of duties, where they would see the beauty of the Lord.

Lastly, Persons not following their desires with suitable endeavours. Many have languishing desires and faint wishes after the light of God's countenance. They may occasionally say, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." But it is not their great desire, their hearts are not in good earnest set on it, else they would add suitable endeavours to their desires, that is, they would seek it resolutely, as Jacob, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," Psal. xxvii. 7, 8. But it is with them as Solomon saith, "The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour." We are now,

II. To show how it comes to pass, that this is not their great desire.

1. Because they are not sensible of their need of it. Why is not Christ prized, but because the whole need not a physician. Many are in Laodicea's case, they think they are rich, increased in goods and stand in need of nothing. If a man's house were all in flames, if he knew it not, it would give him no concern. "The full soul loatheth the honey comb;" but felt need breaks through every obstacle.

2. Because they have not seen the light. What the eye sees not, the heart receives not. A man that never saw the sun, mid-night and mid-day are alike to him; but the man that has seen the light, darkness is wearisome to him, and he longs till the day break.

3. The world and their lusts were never made tasteless or bitter to them. The gracious soul desires the light of God's countenance, because gall and wormwood have been laid on the breasts of their lusts; and so they cannot draw comfort from them. But as for others if the Lord do not hear them, they know of another, to whom they can go. Hence they sit down and take their rest.

4. Because their hearts were never changed, and the natural bent of their souls, go another way than to God. In the time of a great flood, a river may have several streams, but still the great stream is in the ordinary channel. So grace makes the affections run in a new channel, and the great desire of the soul is after God, though there may be inferior desires after the creatures in time of temptation, but when it ceases all go right again in one channel. Most men have too many pursuits, and so some of them must be neglected; when a wife has none but her husband, then all her desire is towards him; but when she has a great many weeping hungry babes, crying out after her, these arrest her affections and care. Let us now proceed,

III. To consider the lamentable nature of this case. It deserves to be lamented with tears of blood, that there should be such a generation whose great desire is not after the light of the Lord's countenance. It is lamentable if you consider,

1. That it is a sign they are of the multitude that go to destruction, not of the few that are saved: that when the world is to be divided they must quit their place among the gracious, and stand upon the other side with the graceless.

2. That they have never seen the beauty of the Lord, and the transcendent excellency of Christ. Had they seen this they could not have so slighted him. His beautiful face, seen by the eye of faith, attracts the heart, Song i. 3.

That they live unacquainted with themselves, with their own heart's state and case. O what a silly empty thing is man without God! Did they see the evil of sin, and the danger of their state while under it, the favour of God would be their desire.

4. They are busy catching at shadows and let the substance go. The soul of man will always be taken up about something. If it be not going out after God it is going after the creature; and behold what they are doing. "For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn them out

cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." All these things are uncertain and insufficient, greater in expectation than fruition.

Lastly, This will land them in everlasting darkness, where the worm never dieth, and where the fire shall not be quenched. Where the light shall be down on them irrecoverably through all eternity.

Use 3. Of comfort to those whose desire is the light of the Lord's countenance above all and instead of all, and yet they are in darkness and distressed with it. Their souls are vexed and disquieted because the Lord hides his face from them. They have been seeking Christ, but they found an empty grave. To which I would say,

I. It is well that you are sensible of your case, that you are not like Samson, who wist not that the Lord was departed from him. The knowledge of the disease is the first step to the cure. Now there is another thing I would have you to know, and then you will be in a fair way of recovery, and that is the cause of the distemper and darkness, why God hath withholden the light of his countenance from you. And,

1. Consider whether or not there hath been a defect in your preparation to meet the Lord. Perhaps you have not been at pains to prepare yourselves, and so you may wonder more that the Lord hath not made a breach upon you, than that he hath hid his face from you, Song iii. 1.

2. Look that there hath been no sin unrepented of, no guilt lying on your souls, some bosom lust, some of the old leaven, some Achan in the camp, and if so, begin now and remove it, cast it out.

3. Look that you have not sat down on your preparation. When we are secure, we are ever ready to fall. O it is hard for us to do any thing, and not to think much of it. And thus the soul, like the bee, may drown itself in its own work. If so, mourn over it, and go to Christ for pardon.

II. I would say to you, perhaps you complain more than you have reason. The sun does not shine always equally clear, and there are different degrees of light of the Lord's countenance, and if you have had but a fainter light be thankful for it and wait for more. Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord; "his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto you, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Sometimes it is with the Christian as with Jocob, when he said, "surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And this mistake may arise from two things.

1. Because they may feel the storm is not yet entirely blown over, they may be still assaulted with doubts, fears and temptations. The light may be only so strong as to keep them from being over-

come, though it do not presently dispel all their darkness, 2 Cor. xii. 7—9. This is a mistake indeed for the light doth put away the darkness only by degrees.

2. Because it doth not answer their expectations, or comes not in the way they looked for it, Matth. xiv. 26. O how hard is it for us to keep from setting limits to God. If God gives not all our asking, we will not give him a receipt for what we receive. If he comes not the way we looked for, we will not acknowledge that he comes at all. But if any glimmerings of the light of his countenance have come through the cloud into your souls, you will know it by these marks, 1. Where there are any new discoveries made, there is light there. If a man see the motes in his room, he knows the sun is up, though he see not the body of the sun. If you see more of your own vileness, and are more humbled under a sense of the evils of your hearts, that is a sign the light of the Lord hath arisen upon you. 2. Where there is heat it is a good sign. Do you feel your souls enamoured with Christ, that is a good sign. Do you hate sin more and love Christ more?

And though it is not noon day with you as with some others, yet I would have you to be thankful. Because perhaps, it has not been so dark night with you as with them. If you be not lifted up so high as others, perhaps neither have you been plunged so deep as they were. That which will lift up one will not be sufficient for another.

Be thankful also, because it is like you have not such hard work to begin to as they have. God's children will not be permitted to eat idle bread. There is commonly hard work for them that get a large meal. It is observable that they that get the brightest manifestations, get also the hardest services. Remember that sovereignty challenges a latitude. May he not do with his own what he pleaseth. Sovereignty takes one piece of clay and sets it on the throne, dandles one child on the knee, and leads another to heaven by the brink of hell.

III. I shall say this to you, that the desire of your soul shall be satisfied. Fear not, for you shall see the salvation of the Lord, and this I say, on these three grounds.

1. Because that desire has the promise of God. "Open thy mouth wide, says he, and I will fill it." He will fill the hungry. God will not leave his children always in the dark, seeing he hath promised to return. Do you then plead the promise of God. Faith in the promise is the hand turning about the key that opens heaven.

2. That desire is of God's own implanting. It is not a flower that grows in nature's garden, and since he has given it, he will ac-

complish it; for he hath not given it in vain, nor only to torment the creature. Nay it is a great mercy in itself, and so is a pledge of further mercy, Hos. ii. 14.

3. The Lord never altogether frustrated such desires. They will be importunate and resolute, and the Lord refuses none such, Luke xviii. 1—8.

Use 4. Then they are richly privileged on whom the Lord has lift up the light of his countenance. I hope there may be some who came sorrowing, and are going away rejoicing. The Lord hath lifted up the light of his countenance upon them, and the wounds of their souls are healed. "But unto you that fear my name, saith the Lord, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." Orders have been given and the prisoner is set at liberty, by a broad view of the righteousness of the Mediator, Job xxxiii. 23, 24. Now sirs, many have desired to see the things which you see, and have not seen them, therefore be thankful to the Lord, and acknowledge his goodness. Let the high praises of God be in your mouth all the day long.

Again, Walk humbly. Keep low sails. Though you be adorned like the dove, with shining feathers, yet look to your black feet, your black heart, and walk softly.

See also that you walk watchfully. Satan will attack you, to rob you. A rash word, and a vain thought, a carnal laughter may be a door to admit the tempter to rob you of your enjoyment.

Be making constant application to Christ, and glory more in himself, than in his gifts.

Lastly, Walk as a child of light, walk tenderly, and do good to others. Walk prudently and tell your experiences, especially to the indolent Christian, "for as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." Tell them also to the distressed Christian. "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren. For this shall every one that is godly, pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him." Tell them also to those weak ones who withdraw from our communion. If they would believe that Christ keeps communion with us, they would be tender of separating from us. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you; for we have heard, that God is with you." Amen.

Ettrick, May 21, 1727.

[Sabbath before the Sacrament.]

THE DUTY OF YIELDING OURSELVES TO THE LORD.

SERMON XXXI.

2 CHRONICLES XXX. 8.

Now, be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever; and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.

THESE words are an exhortation given upon the occasion of a public intimation made of a design to celebrate the sacrament of the passover at the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. The intimation is made to all Israel, even those of the ten tribes, who were not of Hezekiah's kingdom. Though they were of different kingdoms, and many other differences among them, yet these were not to hinder their communion in one sealing ordinance. In the words we have two things.

1. A blessed season of grace marked for them. Now, Hezekiah takes notice, and would have them take notice, of the opportunity put into their hand. Now, when the doors of the house of the Lord, long shut, are opened, chap. xxix. 3. When the temple service, long in disuse, is revived. It is like that of Paul, "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation."

2. Their duty in that blessed season of grace. It is, first, negative. Be not stiff-necked. Hebrew, harden not your neck. It is a metaphor taken from bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, who make great difficulty and resistance about taking it on. In a season of grace, God offers to lay his yoke on the neck of sinners, and now he is offering to lay it on yours. Do not resist nor shift it, make no difficulty about it; but take it on readily and easily.

They had an example of stiffness in their fathers, who had been ruined by it, so that the kingdom of Israel was now near to be extinguished. Therefore he would have them beware of following them.

Then comes next positive duty, which is threefold. First, yielding themselves to the Lord. Hebrew, give ye the hand to the Lord. Giving of the hand, in the language of the Holy Ghost, is opposed to stiff-neckedness, and denotes one's yielding himself up, as the be-

sieged to the besiegers, Jer. l. 15. Or as a nation, Ezek. xvii. 18. or particular persons, 1 Chron. xxix. 24. yield and give up themselves to a king.

It is a natural sign confirming the yielding, and so is used for engaging to a thing yielded to. So the sense is, God is requiring you to yield yourselves to him. Do it then as by giving the hand. The next part of their duty is, to enter into his sanctuary. It is a kind invitation to God's house. The doors of it are opened. Come in then to that place which he hath chosen to put his name there, and have communion with him in his house. They are also to serve him. Serve him in his ordinances, serve him in your daily walk, that his wrath may be turned away.

Doctrine I.—In a season of grace, in which God is offering to lay his yoke on sinners, they should beware of being stiff-necked, or refusing to take it on. Let us inquire,

What is that yoke which the Lord is offering to lay on sinners. There is a twofold yoke which he hath for their necks. First, there is an iron yoke for the destruction of the impenitent. Thus God told the Israelites, "That because they would not serve him with joyfulness, and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things, therefore he would put a yoke of iron upon their neck, until he have destroyed them." This is a yoke that is laid on the sinner, whether he will or not. There is no shifting of it. So this cannot be the yoke here intended. But secondly, there is a soft and easy yoke for the salvation and welfare of penitent sinners. "Take my yoke upon you, saith Jesus, and learn of me: For my yoke is easy." This is not laid on against their will; and so those that struggle against it, and will not receive it, go without it. This is the yoke here meant. God as a judge, lays on the former, as a Saviour he offers to lay on the latter.

Now this is the yoke of kindly willing subjection to God in Christ, submitting ourselves to him. We must submit to him as our rightful Lord and ruler, "as the princes and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king." We must no more go without a yoke, but take on his yoke. It is twofold.

1. The yoke of subjection to the will of his commandments. He that made you is offering to rule and govern you, to give out commandments to you, to be obeyed. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." It is your duty to submit, to take his will for your law. He must be obeyed, as well as believed. "For Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

2. The yoke of his providential will. He that made the world and you, claims the government of the world, and of you; that since you are his own, he may do with you, as to your lot, what he will. "Is it not lawful for me, says he, to do what I will with mine own?" He will not have you masters of your own process, or to carve for yourselves. He claims to dispose of you, as seems good to him. And you ought to take on this yoke, saying, *He shall choose our inheritance for us.*

Now, this obedience of the sinner to God is called a yoke,

1. Because coming under it, we are in a state of subjection as those under a yoke. The ox that hath never been under the yoke is untamed, and goes where he lists; so does the unsubdued sinner. "They say, with our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?" The sinner's own will is his law. But when he submits his neck to God's yoke, he yields to do and suffer what he will, saying, with Paul at his conversion, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"

2. Because it is laid on us for labour or work. Beasts for slaughter go without a yoke at their own ease and pleasure; but those that are for work must bear it. Those men who walk licentiously after their own lusts, if they repent not, will find that the case of cattle for slaughter will be theirs. "For, says the prophet, God will pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter." But the yoke is taken on for labour. Under it we are with David "to serve our generation by the will of God, and to work out our own salvation, with fear and trembling."

3. Because by it we are not only kept at work, but kept in order at our work. If any thing be wrong in the yoke, the work becomes disorderly. They who truly bear the yoke, are uniform and orderly in their obedience. "They have respect unto all God's commandments." They who take their religion by fits and starts, who are partial in the law, strict in some plain duties, loose in others, who serve God but by halves at best, discover themselves not to be truly come under the yoke.

4. Because of its uneasiness to the flesh. Though the service of God is a blessed state of freedom; yet to flesh and blood, it is a yoke, grating to our sensitive appetites, and crossing our corrupt wills. To the new nature indeed it is easy; but to the old corrupt nature most uneasy; and as long as there are any remains of it, there will be a pain in bearing it. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Lastly, Because it fixes subjection upon us. It is not left to us whether we will obey and bear or not. But we are under sacred bonds, that we must needs do it. And they are the very strongest bonds. What can bind more firmly than the authority of God? Every duty and dispensation toward us is bound on with a *thus saith the Lord.* Who then dare say against it? If God say stoop, who dare stand upright? Yet these bonds are sweet and agreeable to his willing people. They love the law of God, and to them his commandments are not grievous. Therefore I exhort you, be not stiff-necked but take on God's yoke.

Motives.—1. God is the party with whom we have to do. Whoever they are whom men will adventure to strive against, they should consider that they are not to take upon them to strive against God. *For woe unto him that striveth with his Maker.* His sovereignty should awe us into humble submission.

2. There will be nothing gained by stiff-neckedness to the yoke of God. "For who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered." The potsherds of earth cannot make head against their Maker.—When the two are engaged it is easy to see who must either bow or break. The truth is, so doing we work against our own undoubted interest.

Lastly, God has waited long on you, but will not wait always. Many opportunities of grace he hath put into your hands, and many you have slighted. But beware of going on in that way, lest the reconciliation be broken up suddenly. "For he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy."

Doctrine II.—Now, while a season of grace is afforded to sinners, it is their duty to fall in with it speedily, to give the hand and yield themselves to the Lord.—Now says the text, yield yourselves unto the Lord, &c. They had then a solemn season of grace and so have we now. Here we shall,

I. Show how sinners have a season of grace afforded them.

II. What is supposed in this gracious call to sinners, to give the hand and yield themselves to the Lord.

III. Show in a general and also particular manner, what it is to give the hand or yield ourselves to the Lord. We are,

I. To show how sinners have a season of grace afforded them, *a now*, in which they may yield themselves to the Lord.

1. By their being continued in life, and not cut off by death in their state of rebellion against God. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whether thou goest."

They who are gone out of the world in their sins, have now no more access to get them removed, no more season of grace, which is confined to this present life. At death the door is shut, and as the tree falls it must lie.

2. By the call of the gospel, its being sounded in their ears, as directed to them. "Unto you, O men, do I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Whatever low thoughts some entertain of the preaching of the gospel, it is God's appointed mean of salvation.

"For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The preaching of the gospel is to every one that hears it, God's message of peace and reconciliation; it is God's summons to sinners to yield, the execution whereof will be precisely marked in the court of heaven. And the voice of these turtles heard in the land makes a day of grace there; for the gospel *is the grace of God that bringeth salvation.*

3. By solemn sacramental occasions afforded to a people. This is the case in the text. These make a precious *now*, not to be slighted; lest the opportunity be lost, and the wind never again blow so fair to us for Immanuel's land. At ordinary occasions of the gospel, the blessed bargain is offered; but now the seal of heaven is also ready to confirm it. And many have had much comfort in a deathbed, from what they have enjoyed on such solemn occasions.

Lastly, By some inward motions felt within one's own soul, pressing them to comply and yield now at length. It is not to be thought, but that several feel something of this now and then. Now that is the Beloved by his Spirit putting in his hand by the hole of the lock. It is the secret whisper of the Spirit to the sinner to yield. It is a fair gale blowing to you for Immanuel's land.—And so a special season of grace. "When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." We are now,

II. To inquire what is supposed in this gracious call to sinners, to give the hand, and yield themselves to the Lord.

1. It supposes that sinners are naturally in a state of rebellion against the Lord. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." He is their rightful sovereign, but they are alienated from him, and are like a fort keeping out against him; hence the gospel has much to do to bring them to yield. "For the weapons of our warfare are

not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." What else is your refusing to comply with the will of God's commandments and of his providence? All the mighty prejudices, and reasonings of the corrupt mind against religion are so many strong walls by which they defend themselves in their rebellion.

2. That though the Lord can break the sinner in pieces for his rebellion, yet he would rather that the sinner yield. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" In justice he might cut us off, because we have lifted up the heel against him. By his power he can do it as easily as we can break an earthen pitcher. A touch of his iron rod would dash us in pieces; but mercy interposeth to try if the sinner will yield himself. He needs us not. Though we were all broken to pieces, he would be happy in himself; yet our yielding would be more pleasant to him.

3. That God's hand is stretched out to receive the sinner yielding himself. He is willing to receive the worst of sinners yielding themselves to him. "I have spread out my hands, says he, all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts." He is now on a throne of grace, offering you the covenant of his peace. He is ready to strike hands with you; and there is nothing to hinder the closing of the bargain, if you will but honestly strike hands with him.

4. That forced work will not be acceptable here.—He will have a willing people that with the full consent of their own hearts shall become his. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* He does not say, He will force them to come in, but he would have sinners from their own judgment and choice, yield themselves. Terror indeed uses to begin the work, but love and good-will crowns it, where it is right.

Lastly, That the sinner willingly yielding shall be kindly received and accepted. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, saith Jesus, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The sinner shall be received into the covenant, a marriage covenant with our Maker; give the hand then, yield yourselves to the Lord and it shall be a bargain, the best bargain you ever made, or ever can make, a bargain for eternity, by which you shall be made for ever happy. Nothing shall any more prevent the making

of it; and nothing shall for ever hinder the keeping of it. Let us proceed,

III. To shew in general and also in a particular manner, what it is to give the hand or yield ourselves to the Lord. Let us,

I. Speak of the nature of it in general. It comprehends,

1. The work of conviction in receiving it. When the Spirit of the Lord lays siege to a soul, the first attack that is made on it, is by the fiery law convincing of sin and misery. When "the Spirit comes he will reprove the world of sin; of righteousness and of judgment." Many have the doctrine of the law urged upon them for their conviction; but will not yield, retaining still good thoughts of their own state and case. "When they hear the words of the curse, they bless themselves in their heart saying, We shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." But elect souls are at length brought to yield, saying with Paul, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Then like the prodigal, they conclude themselves ruined perishing creatures; seeing themselves altogether vile in their nature, hearts, lips, and lives, and therefore concluded under the curse.

2. The work of illumination in the knowledge of Christ, in receiving the discovery of a Saviour. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This impression is made by the gospel, on the soul suffering a divine siege. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In conviction there is a yielding to the light of the law, but if there is no more, the soul will at best flee from the Lord. But in gospel illumination the soul is drawn to yield to the Lord. Saith Jesus, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It sees in Christ a remedy for its wound, is persuaded of his ability and willingness to save, his all-fulness of merit and of spirit, his superlative excellency affording a rest for the conscience and the heart.

3. The work of humiliation, in becoming pliable to the divine proposal in the gospel; leading them trembling and astonished to say with Paul, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" The iron sinew in the sinner's neck is broken, the heart of stone is taken away, and the soul is made willing in a day of power. Thus the sinner is brought down from his towering heights; the outer door of the mind and the inner door of the will, are both cast open to the

Lord Christ; the soul yields to the summons, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

4. The work of faith in the sinner's believing on, and so closing with Christ, as his Saviour from sin and wrath, renouncing all others. This is precisely the chief thing meant by giving the hand to the Lord.—For faith is, in scripture style, the hand of the soul. —Hence it is said, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." And as the Lord in the gospel, holds out his hand to the sinner, Isaiah lxv. 2. So the sinner by believing gives him his hand. *Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.* Thus the bargain is closed by Christ and the sinner striking hands. And this is a work of divine power. "Wherefore, says Paul, we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

5. The work of repentance from dead works, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, Col. ii. 11. Faith and repentance are inseparable. That faith which produceth not repentance, even true evangelical repentance, is but dead faith. "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." If you continue to yield yourselves to your lusts, you have not yielded to the Lord, Romans vi. 13, 14. He that yields to the Lord, renounces his former lovers and his other lords, saying, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name."

Lastly, The work of entire resignation; in the believer's wholly devoting and yielding up himself to the Lord. Says the apostle, "they first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God." Whatever way the man disposed of himself before, he now lays himself and his all at the Lord's feet, without reserve. He surrenders himself to the Lord without limitation. We shall now,

II. Explain the nature of this giving of ourselves to the Lord more particularly. And,

I. Let us enquire what it is, that the soul giving the hand or yielding itself to the Lord, doth yield up to him. If you will give the hand to the Lord, you must then,

1. Yield your souls, or inner man to the Lord. If he be thy Lord, he must be the Lord of thy soul in all the faculties thereof, and the kingdom of God must be within thee. "Thou shalt love, saith Jesus, the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." And you must yield your mind and conscience to the Lord, to be taught, instructed, and directed by his word and Spirit only. Men must no longer be lords of your conscience, by your taking the judgment of the carnal world for your rule in matters of sin and duty, Eph. ii. 2; or by taking up principles in religion on mere human testimony or authority. But you must hear him as the great Teacher. "And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for one is your Master even Christ." And you must believe what he says, because he says it; in opposition to your own or others' corrupt reasonings. Making our reason the rule of faith, is subversive of divine faith: and makes the assent, knowledge, or opinion not divine faith, because not raised on divine testimony, but on the testimony of reason.

You must also yield your will to him, that his will may henceforth be thine. Saying, "Father thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." If thou wilt have a will of thine own still, and not submit it in all things to the Lord, thou dost not yield to, but rebel against the Lord. If the motions of a will contrary to the Lord's rise in thee, thou must deny and cross them and submit thy will to him. You must in like manner yield your heart and affections to him. "My son, saith he, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." If you yield him the hand without the heart, you yield not yourselves. Your heart is in a thousand pieces, your affections scattered among the creatures. Your heart must be united, your affections gathered in as the rays of the sun in the burning glass, and all point to and centre in Christ. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth that I desire beside thee." He must be the object of your love and desire, your chief joy and delight, and have the throne in your heart, all lying at his footstool.

2. Yield your bodies, or outward man to the Lord. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The Lord hath redeemed the body as well as the soul, and by the tenor of the covenant, he is as to believers, *their God*, not of their souls only, but of their persons, soul and body. Now as he is for it, it must be for him. *For the body*

is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. It ought then to be consecrated to him as a living sacrifice, and be employed and spent in his service; our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Whatever way it can be serviceable to him, it should be.

3. Yield up all your lusts and idols to him, as traitors which you can no more harbour; saying, *what have we any more to do with idols.* "Repent, says God; and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Let there be no secret morsel reserved, as you would not quit your part in Christ. A day of yielding to the Lord, is a day in which a bill of divorce is put in the hand of all idols. And if there be any bosom lust, let it be yielded up by head mark as the signal competitor for the heart.

4. Yield all your lawful enjoyments to him, so as to be at his disposal, and never to break with him for them or any of them. Jesus said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Yield your relations to the Lord that they may be his with your consent, to be continued or taken from you when he will; your substance in the world to be disposed of as he sees good; your credit and reputation, to let him have it, if he sees meet to make a stepping-stone of it for his own glory: your liberty, ease and conveniences of life; yea, and your life itself, to be for his service, and if he will for a sacrifice.

Lastly, Yield your lot and your all to him; saying, *he shall choose our inheritance for us.* Close your own eyes, and let the Lord henceforth lead you; hold up your own hands and let him cut and carve for you.—Be no more choosers for yourselves, but resign yourselves to him, what way to carry you through the world home, through good and bad report, adversity or prosperity. Give him the choice of your comforts, and of your crosses and afflictions. Your lawful desires must be laid at his feet. Let us now,

II. Shew in what sort and manner the soul should give the hand or yield itself to the Lord.

1. Yield yourselves to the Lord in a marriage covenant. "Behold, says he, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come unto the marriage." The Lord Jesus Christ, your Maker, is offering himself to you for a husband. "And I will betroth thee, saith he, unto me for ever; yea I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." The gospel preached unto you is the proposal of the match with your souls, and you are pressed in his name to accept. The Bridegroom is the heir of all

things. His hand is put out to you this day; now give him your hand and yield yourselves, and it is a bargain.

Now you must yield yourselves to him wholly. Servants give work for wages. Suitors give token to further love. But married persons give themselves wholly to one another. Give yourselves to be for him. "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." The import of this is expressed in these words, *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* As if he had said, He is the sum of my life, the centre of my heart, affections, and actions. You must yield yourselves to him *only.* "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." A married state is a state of rest. "Naomi said to Ruth, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee. The soul out of Christ is in a restless state. Heart and eyes rambling up and down among the creatures, seeking and looking for a proper match. But when once it yieldeth itself to Christ, it rests in him and closeth its eyes as now matched and at the end of its desires; saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides thee." And no wonder, for Christ says to the soul, "Thou shalt not be for another man; so will I also be for thee."—And,

You must yield yourselves to him for ever. "He will be the strength of your heart and your portion for ever." There is an awfully solemn clause in earthly marriages, namely, Till God shall separate you by death. Here death stands up on the one hand of the bride, while the husband stands on the other, warning her, that it will come between him and her at length. But the heavenly marriage is for ever. No death, divorce, nor second marriage. As Christ takes the soul, so the soul yields itself to Christ for ever and ever.

2. Yield yourselves as subjects to a conqueror.—"The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Christ appears in the gospel sitting on a white horse, with his bow in his hand and a crown on his head, going forth conquering and to conquer. He is shooting arrows of the law and arrows of love among you. If you find the force of the former they will gall you, if of the latter you must yield as conquered. And,

Yield to him as your king and sovereign Lord, casting open the gates of your souls to him, that have been shut against him before. Give up with all other lords, that formerly have had dominion over

you, and enter into allegiance to him, Isaiah xxvi. 13. You must break with your former lusts and look no more after them.

You must yield to him at discretion. Many will not yield to Christ, but by capitulation. They must have such and such terms of him, if they yield; some right eye, or right hand lust must be spared; Christ's cross must not be laid on their tender shoulders. But you must yield at discretion, or you really yield not at all to him. Put a blank in his hand, or else you give him not the hand, saying, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do.* And lay your accounts with the worst, that a popish and malignant sword, fire or rope shall not separate between Christ and you.

3. Yield yourselves as filial servants to a fatherly Master. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels: and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." There are two kinds of persons who make wrong work of yielding to the Lord. First, those who yield themselves as sons, not servants. They will take the inheritance, but will not bear his yoke. They will pretend to believe, and under the pretence of faith and free grace take liberty to themselves in sin. But such faith is dead and will never save you, James ii. 17.

Second, Those who yield themselves as mere servants. They will serve the Lord on condition salvation may be their wages. And many make such bargains with Christ at communions which he will never approve. Our Lord is seeking no such servants among you, but sends them away to the law their proper master, Matth. xix. 16, 17. All his are filial servants. "Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son then an heir of God through Christ." They are, you see, first saved by faith and get a right to the inheritance by free grace, and strength in him for work; and then they are set to work, in a way of gratitude to their Father.

The Improvement.

Use. 1. Of conviction and humiliation, in respect of the sad bias which man's nature has got. The very call to yield ourselves, even this fixes upon us a black brand of rebelliousness against God, and backwardness to good. It stigmatizes us as a parcel of apostates, wilful headstrong fools, naturally running headlong to their own destruction in a course of opposition to God. Mourn over this, you that have not yielded yourselves to the Lord. See and be humbled for the rebellion of your nature and the rebellions of your lives. Look to your own picture and drop tears over your state and case. "How canst thou say, I am not polluted. Thou art like a wild

ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure." Some of you have sometimes seemed to yield: but ye deceived yourselves and others, and have gone back with the dog to the vomit, and have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds.

Mourn over this also you that have yielded yourselves to the Lord. Look back to the state of rebellion in which you formerly were. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Look over the remains of the backwardness of your nature yet with you, and what sad work it has made in your life, thwarting with the will of God's commandments and providences as if you had not yielded yourself to the Lord. And to help forward your humiliation, consider how long the Lord has waited upon you patiently, while he might have broke you in pieces at every time you refused to yield to him. And let his goodness lead you to repentance.

Consider also how you have fought against your own interest; refusing to yield to the Lord you have in effect courted your own destruction by that means.—"For he that sinneth against me, saith the Saviour, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." And you have stood in the way of your own mercy.

Use 2. Of exhortation. Come then sinners, yield yourselves to the Lord.

Motives.—1. You must yield yourself to one or other, for you are not self-sufficient. If you yield not to the Lord, you will yield to a vain world, deceitful lusts, and so to the devouring lion. Therefore if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve.

2. The Lord hath the best right to you. You were the Lord's originally by creation. You have yielded yourselves to his enemy Satan and cast off the yoke of subjection to God. But you never had a right to dispose of yourself to another than him. Therefore return him his own.

3. Consider what the Lord has yielded for you. The Father yielded his own Son to the death for sinners, Rom. viii. 32. Jesus Christ yielded his life for us though enemies, Rom. v. 8. The Holy Ghost hath yielded himself to strive with you for your yielding. Gen. vi. 3. And hath been many times resisted, grieved, and vexed by you; and yet continues to strive with you. Every wound that Christ got for us, is a mouth crying aloud to you to yield yourselves.

4. The Saviour is very desirous of your yielding.—*My son*, says he, *give me thine heart*. Nothing you can do, can be so acceptable to him. He values it as a king doth his crown, Song iii. 11. O! if he

should come down in person and propose your yielding to him, would you refuse? But our Master is a king and courts his bride by proxy. Matt. xxii. 4. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God."

5. He is not seeking your yielding yourselves for nothing. Yield yourselves to him and he will give himself to you. Hosea iii. 3. "He will take your wants upon him, and give you of his fulness."

6. You must yield or die, bow or break. "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

7. Yield, and all your former rebellions shall be forgiven, and you shall be restored to the Lord's favour. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Thus pardoned you shall enjoy all the privileges of his subjects.

Lastly, Yield, or the Lord will have war with you for ever. And how will you be able to make head against him? How will you bear his coming. 2 Thess. i. 7, 9.

What prevents you that you will not yield? Some will not, because if they yield to the Lord, they must forego their lusts, which they know not how to live without. And hence their love to these fixes an enmity to God, and an aversion to his yoke in them.—The spring of this is unacquaintedness with Christ and never seeing sin in its own colours. Assure yourselves the Lord bids you part with nothing for him, without offering you far better in its stead. And a discovery of Christ in his glory would determine the matter, Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

Some think it is too soon for them to yield, for they are yet but young, they may yield time enough long after this. I shall yield to you, if there is none in the kirk-yard as young as you. Does death ask any person's age? Are you sure you shall live to be old? The longer you live without yielding, the more Satan's interest will be strengthened in you, and is it not strong enough already. And must the bloom and vigour be for sin and Satan, and only the withering age for God. Some fear that they will not be able to keep with God, but Satan will have them back again. But yield, throwing yourselves into God's covenant of free grace; it will keep you. "He will put his fear in your hearts and you shall not depart from him." Wherefore, I summon you to yield; and yield now presently and freely; it is dangerous to delay: "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Amen.

Ettrick, September 3, 1710.

AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

SERMON XXXII.

MARK X. 21.

Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest.

WHEN Satan had taken man prisoner, he put him in chains, Isaiah lxi. 1. Chains of several links, even divers lusts and pleasures. With these he attempts to hold them, till he get them in chains of darkness in hell. Jesus Christ hath broken the chains of some of these prisoners of Satan: but very many of them are yet as Adam left them. Some the devil hath in the chain of irreligion and profanity, even a chain so short, as they have no power to set a foot on God's way. Some are in the long chain of formality, as this man; and as for them, you may see, that they are as sure in the devil's grasp as those whose heads he holds in greater restraint. *One thing thou lackest.* They get so much scope in the ways of God, that they can scarcely think that the devil hath them in his chain. All these, said this man, have I observed from my youth. But when a convenient time comes, the devil can draw them to himself, quite out of God's way. Ver. 22. He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

In the 20th verse this man had made an ample profession of a good life, and in the text we have Christ's return. In which we have, 1. Christ's gesture towards him, he beheld him, he cast his eyes anew upon him, on that word, looking on him so as to express his inward affection to him. 2. The Saviour's affection to him. He loved him. 3. His answer to him. One thing thou lackest.

1. We have our Lord's gesture and carriage to him. He beheld him wishfully. The eyes are the windows through which the soul looks out, and they admirably discover the affection of the mind; either love or hatred. It was love here, particularly compassion and pity, which is a kind of love especially discovered by the eyes. Christ had a human compassion towards so civil a person.

But why did Christ thus look upon him? Because he was true man, and so capable of true human passions and affections, and particularly of pity towards objects of compassion, which this man in a special manner was. And so we find him affected even to the shed-

ding of tears, over the case of those, on whom as God he was about to bring wrath to the uttermost. When Jesus beheld Jerusalem, he wept over it. And there was much in this man's case to move a generous spirit to compassion.

1. He was a civil discreet man, but possessed of no religion, an absolute stranger to true godliness. There are some people who have neither grace nor manners; they are abominable to the godly, because they have no religion; and to civil men, because they have not so much as common civility. But this man was civil and discreet, yet being without true religion, he was a pitiful sight to move compassion.

Such persons excite compassion because they are dutiful to all but God and their own souls. They feed others but starve themselves. They make themselves lovely to men, but remain hateful to God. Besides if they had religion, it would be much better for them. Civility and discretion go far to recommend religion to the world, that knows it not, and cannot value it for its intrinsic beauty. Hence we are commanded to be all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, Religion with an unpolished conversation is like gold in the ore; but accompanied with this discretion shines as a piece of gold new struck.

2. He was a man concerned to be at heaven, but likely never to see it; and such an one is a spectacle of commiseration indeed. Some persons are posting so fast to the pit, that they never look over their shoulder to heaven: if they go to hell, they can scarcely say that they are disappointed, for they were not minding heaven. They have found a broad easy way, and they have a mind to hold by it end where it will. But Oh! what shall we say, or what tears of blood may not their case draw forth, whose eyes are still fixed on heaven, while the devil is driving them in an invisible chariot to destruction? They are running to obtain the crown of glory, but have mistaken the way, and will land in eternal reproach. The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city. Strive, says our Lord, to enter in at the strait gate; for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. They are courting their own damnation in a mask, and grasp at a weight of wrath, instead of the weight of glory, which must needs make a fearful surprise when they are undeceived.

3. He was a man of a good natural temper, but no grace. All these, says he, have I kept from my youth. He was none of the devil's lions, filling the place where he lived with the noise of his re-

vellings and extravagancies; but he was one of the devil's lambs, going to hell without letting the world hear the sound of his feet. And such surely is a pitiful sight.

Some persons have grace, but a rugged natural temper like Jonah, who was seldom but out of humour. They have the jewel, but an ill case to keep it in.—Some have good nature, but no grace, they have the cabinet, but they want the jewel to put into it. Ah! what pity is it to see such a fair building empty, or rather made a habitation of devils.

4. He was a man that had done many things in the way of a good life, but marred all he had done with the want of one thing. If you saw an artificer at great pains to make a curious piece of work, and when he had done break all in pieces with a rash touch of his hand, you could not observe it without regret. Or if you saw one make such a piece, but when he comes to one thing necessary to make it useful, he stops there and with all his art cannot master it, would not that be a pitiful sight? So here. Oh! it is sad to think how with some that do many things in religion, there is still something that stands between heaven and them.—Though they are not far from the kingdom of heaven, yet they never enter into it. We have,

II. Christ's affection to him. *He loved him.* There is a special love which God bears to his own, which cannot be understood of this man, as appears from the sequel, where he shewed he loved the world better than Christ. But there are two things in it.

1. There was a real affection of passion and love in Christ's human soul towards this man, upon the account of the many good qualifications which appeared in him, all the good gifts of God. 2. Forasmuch as in God there are no affections or passions properly so called, (such prove one a man, not God) the love of Christ, as God, is to be understood in respect of the effect, not of the affection; and such love God hath to all his creatures in so far as he wills and does them good, seeing every thing God made was good and is in itself good. Besides there is a love to men of which the scripture speaks, Titus iii. 4. By which God loves his own work and his own good gifts in them more or less according to their measure. Thus he loved him, spoke friendly to him, approving what was good in him, so far as it was good.

Out of this a popish commentator offers to hammer two things. 1. That the man spoke truth, verse 20th otherwise Christ had loved a liar, or a lie. Answer, He might as well have inferred Christ's commending deceit and injustice from his commending the unjust Steward, Luke xvi. 8. But his keeping of the commandments, so

far as he had really done it, was good in itself: his moral seriousness was good in itself and so lovely, and thus he might in that view love him with a general love, as well as the godly with a special love, notwithstanding of defects. 2. The congruous merit of good works before faith, because Christ loved him for these. Answer, What God loves and approves is not therefore meritorious: but if so it was incongruous to set him away without faith, which yet was done and that is to blaspheme.

Here I shall first shew out of the context why Christ loved him. Now to draw from this lovely picture, which yet wanted one stroke to make it complete for salvation, the want of which marred all the rest; I remark,

1. That he was a zealous man; he came running to Christ. Though he had little light he had much heat; much affection for heaven, though little judgment about the way. His zeal carried him to wait on, and not to let slip an opportunity of conversing with Christ, and he would rather marr his gravity by running than lose it. This was good in itself, besides there was something good in his zeal, for it was in a good thing, and herein he condemned many.

Many who run away from Christ, turn their backs on him and his way after they had made a profession of it, 2 Pet. ii. 22.

He condemned also those who have no heart for conversing with Christ, but are dragged to duties as the malefactor to the execution; whose heart that way is gone, and they are without all life and vigour in the way of God. Those also whose zeal carries them off the way where Christ walks, and excites them to separate themselves, and to entice others to withdraw from the means of knowledge, how they may inherit eternal life.

2. He was a civil discreet man, and respectful to Christ as a teacher, though he took him not for the Messiah. Rudeness was no part of religion to him, and this was good in itself, though it made him no better Christian, than he who answered discreetly, Mark xii. 34. By this he condemned many whose religion makes them rude, and leaves them not within the bounds of common discretion, especially setting themselves to trample under foot the stars that Christ holds in his own right hand.

3. He was willing to learn and asks a religious question; that was good, though not enough. Hereby he condemned many who neither have knowledge nor are willing to be instructed, and those that are puffed up with their knowledge, so as they are above teaching, and who are so far from beginning religious discourse, that they will not hold it up when it is begun to their hand.

4. His question was about the great and main thing of religion, how to be saved. He started not the question about ceremonies and traditions as the Pharisees were wont to do, but about the substantials of practical godliness. That was good, but not enough. He looked beyond time and was concerned for how it might be with him in eternity. By this he condemned those that live like the beasts grovelling on the ground, and are never considering what way they shall stand before the tribunal of God; and those who will propose any question than what way they shall be saved; who in all their religious questions are sure to abide about the out-skirts of religion and never touch the vitals of it.

5. He was a man of a blameless life outwardly, that had studied to keep the law of God so far as he understood it, and that from his youth. This was good, but not enough; more than Paul's religion before his conversion, which yet condemns many who make no conscience of living according to the very letter of the law of God.

Finally, Add to all this, he was a young man, Matth. xix. 20. A ruler and a rich man; yet neither his youth, honour, nor riches, diverted him from these things. There are but few like him in our day, few concerned about their eternal state, while in the flower of youth; especially if they be honourable and rich.—Many of the higher ranks among us, especially of the younger sort, reject religion utterly, and live as if their birth, honour, and riches, gave them a dispensation to be vile. It is like that Christ looked upon him the rather, that there were but few of his kind, that had any appearances of good in them. "Have any of the rulers believed on him?"

I shall now, secondly, shew why Christ loved him on these accounts. The reason was, because these things were the good gifts of God, though not grace, they shewed in so far a respect to the law. They came from God, James i. 17. and he cannot but love what comes out of his own hand, for nothing comes from him but what is good. If God should withdraw from us all that is his, there would be nothing left us but sin, which is the only thing in which there is no good, and that came not from God. Now a jewel is still precious though in a dunghill.

Inference 1. How much more will the Lord love them who are true Christians, not only outwardly, but inwardly. Does he love those external acts of moral discipline, how much more the spiritual man and his graces? Does he discern and love those things that are excellent in natural men, how much more real grace in renewed men, though mixed with corruption.

Again, Learn to love the good gifts of God in whomsoever they

appear, and stand not to commend what good is discernable in any person, whatever evil be with it. It is an evil eye that can fix on nothing but men's sores and faults.

Let this commend morality and the external duties of morality to you. Though they are not the whole, they are a part of religion. And though they will not get an eternal reward, yet God usually gives them a temporal one. They are of use to preserve external order in society, and so far contribute to the honour of God and his law.

III. I come to the main thing in the text, our Lord's answer, in which we have two things. 1. A defect alleged against him. *One thing thou lackest.* 2. A discovery of that defect, namely, his worldliness. *Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.*— Here he touches his idol of jealousy, and brings forth the lurking venom of his heart. One thing thou lackest. It does not import, that he had no more wants but one. But, 1. That this was one thing that stood betwixt him and eternal life; and 2. That this one thing marred all his other things.

Doctrine I. Persons may go far in the way of religion, and yet have one thing that effectually stands between heaven and them. Here I shall,

I. Confirm the doctrine.

II. Shew whence it is that one thing should still be lacking in many who come a great length in religion.

I. I am to confirm the doctrine.

1. It appears from scripture instances, where we find persons going a great length, yet one thing mainly their ruin. Herod did many things, but stuck at his lust, would not, could not part with Herodias. That was a step in the way to heaven, that he could never ascend. Judas's covetousness; Demas's snare was the present world.

2. It is plain hypocrites may go far in religion, and may attain a great height in mortification, such as it is, yet it is no less plain there is still some one lust or other where they stop. For an universal hatred of, and resistance to sin, is a mark of sincerity, Psalm cxix. 6. And their feigned repentance should be true, were there not some sweet morsel still reserved.

3. The godly themselves will readily be found to have one thing that is hardest to subdue and that gives them the greatest trouble, though the power of it be broken. There is a weak side, a sin that most easily besets them. David makes his victory over it a mark of sincerity. "I was also, says he, upright before him; and I kept myself from mine iniquity." If this be so in the green tree, how must it be in the dry.

4. There are some sins, that like Saul among the people, are head and shoulders above the rest. Our Lord calls these, right eyes and right hands. Some sins are like the nails and hairs in the body, which can be taken off without pain. No wonder that some people shake off these; but for sins which the corrupt heart cannot want, more than the body can want the eye or the hand; here is the difficulty, and there is the ruin of many souls. Such are like those who have a male in their flock, but will not part with it for God, but vow a corrupt thing which they can more easily spare. For further confirmation I shall instance in some particulars.

1. Persons may have many exercises about their case and yet never attain sufficient humiliation, the want of this stands in the way of many to keep them out of heaven; they want root and soon wither away. This is the great spring of hypocrisy and of apostacy. The wound is given but it is not deep enough, hence it is healed again ere ever the corruption be expelled, as in Pharaoh; the ground of the heart is not ploughed up, though the surface be broken, hence sowing among thorns. It strikes not at the root of sin, the sin of our nature, hence it retains its vigour. And this is the cause why all falls together.

2. They may have many changes to the better, yet lack the great saving change, as Judas, the stony and the thorny ground hearers. Persons may be cast into several moulds, yet never into that of regeneration.—Many new things may be about persons while they lack one thing, the new nature. This will effectually bar them out of heaven. New affections may be where the old stony heart remains. A new life where the old nature is still. And what serves all these changes, while that one thing is lacking. "For except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

3. People may do many things in religion, who yet stick at some one thing that they can never do. There are some duties to which men's nature is most opposite, and this produces a difficulty which it is impossible to get over without saving grace. So that these are still the exceptions in the soul's closing with Christ, the right eyes with which they cannot part. Such was the contempt of the world to this man. God points at that in particular, and that by all things they cannot comply with.

4. People may bear many things and yet there may be one thing which they cannot bear by any means.—Even like a person that hath a sore in his body, he can bear a touch any where but in that place. The world is the idol of some people, they can bear any thing but poverty; credit is that of others, any thing but what injures it. Some one thing or another they set their hearts upon, and

they can bear any thing but the want of that. God wreathes that yoke about their necks, but they like unruly beasts struggle in the bond and rage as a wild bull in the net. We now proceed,

II. To shew whence it is that one thing should still be lacking in many who come a great length in religion.

1. Because the power of sin is not broken in them, but it still lives and reigns whatever progress they make in religion. Hence it must and will undoubtedly exert itself one way or another. As where a stream is banked up, but the fountain not stopped up, the water will always break out at one place or another, it must have a vent. So here, lust is powerful and if the power of it be not broken, it will domineer and keep the soul in subjection one way or another.

2. Because it is never complete in them, and where it ceases they will always lack one thing. In the truly godly the change is not perfect, but yet it is that which goes through all. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." All the members of the old man with head and heart are struck with a deadly blow though none of them are killed outright; but in the hypocrite it is not so. They may be wounded in many parts of the old man, but one at least remains entire, like a man whose heart is whole which secures his life, though otherwise in bad case.

3. Because their souls never come to take up their rest in God, which is done only by true faith. "For we which have believed do enter into rest." Man is a weak empty creature and must needs have something to rest in. By nature we have lost God, and they continue under that loss, hence they rest in the creatures, and when God has removed many lusts from them as their pillows on which they laid their head, there must still be one thing left, or they can have no rest at all.—Hence that one thing is something, on which their satisfaction which they neither have in God nor in other things, depends.

4. Because they have two parties to satisfy as double-minded men, conscience and corruption. The reformation attained to conscience, one thing is lacking to corruption. Conscience obliges to do many things, which corruption, reigning, will not let be done. There are duties to feed their hopes, lusts to feed their desires, and thus is the heart divided betwixt Christ and their lusts.

Use 1. Of information.

1. It informs us of the certainty of the mark of grace, universal obedience. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments."—A heart loosed from all idols and hating every false way, is real sincerity. The most refined hypocrisy

leaves still one thing that is lacking, one lust, one idol with which the heart cannot part; some lust from which the hypocrite was never weaned and which was never made bitter enough to him.

2. Many good duties and great performances in religion will be lost as to eternal life, 2 John, 8. O it is sad to think how men go many a difficult step in the way of religion and get over them, and yet stick at last in one step and never come to the journey's end.—This brings a sad disappointment, as if a man should plough and sow with others, but when reaping time comes, he has nothing, as the foolish virgins lacked oil in their lamps.

3. See here the root of defection and apostacy from God, men's falling off from any life and vigour in religion which they have attained. How often is that verified, "your goodness is as the morning cloud and early dew, it passeth away." How is it confirmed in our experience! How flat and dead are many turned since the sacrament; how unlike to those that were witnesses to, and partakers of that work? Alas! where at best one thing is lacking, matters cannot long be in a prosperous state. For,

Where one thing is lacking Satan has still a sure hold; he is like Pharaoh in another case; if ought be left he knows people will come back again. One lust unmortified, not given up, will open the door to the rest, and make their latter end worse than their beginning, Matt. xii. 44. He can sink the ship with one leak as well as an hundred.

Again, where one thing is lacking, there has been no real closing with Christ, and where there is no marriage, no wonder the soul doth not bring forth fruit unto God. The branch that unites not with the stock must needs wither, and one unmortified idol will draw away the soul from the Lord.

Where one thing is lacking, there wants but a temptation suited to that one thing, and then the soul is just where it was. And Satan will watch the opportunity to set fire to and blow up the house by the train that is left, especially after solemn engaging to Christ. There are four things I fear have done us an ill turn.

The world. Is there an eclipse come over you in respect of your soul's case, then look that the earth has not got in beween God and you; Luke viii. 14.—It is a busy time. I am afraid that Martha's business, hath made Mary's part to be forgotten, and that people have looked so steadfastly upon the earth, that heaven is out of their sight. That is the handle with which the devil holds fast many souls. Reigning sloth hurts many, Eccles. x. 18. Many awaken for a while and begin to work, who in a little give over; sloth creeping on by degrees, which was never truly mortified, like weeds

in the spring. Few have Caleb's spirit to follow the Lord fully. But they are at pains to get something, and when they have got it, they fold their hands and sleep, till poverty come upon them, as one that travelleth, and that is the one thing that ruins them.

Self-confidence injures many. *Though all should deny thee, yet will not I*, said Peter to his Master. When men cast off fear they are near a fall. The mountain is never nearer to being removed, than when persons are saying it standeth sure. A jealousy of ourselves, I fear is the one thing many of us lack, and that is our loss. The fixed stars appear to tremble most; and that Christian stands fastest, who is always afraid lest he fall and lose what he hath attained. When men view the duties of the covenant, and do not improve the grace of it, they will soon turn slack-handed in these duties.

Finally, An unstable mind and judgment is very hurtful. No wonder the tree wither, that is never fast at the root. This was the one thing that ruined the Galatians, for though they had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, yet when Satan came in upon them, with that they quickly lost all the savoury impressions which they had of the hearing of faith. The wavering temper among us, I am confident, is no small hinderance in the way of the gospel's success. And as I bless God for what stability any of you have attained, so as for you that deserted the message which I had from God to you this day eight days, whether there were many of you or few, and joined yourselves to those, whose work it is to break down what we build up, and that after that solemn reproof of, and lamentation over that practice, and other heart-breaking pieces of your contempt of the gospel, which was given on the fast-day, and after what you heard and saw on the sacrament day, I do, as the messenger of the Lord, in his name, rebuke you here as obstinate contemners of the message sent of God unto you, and protest as the messenger of God to you, that this rebuke stand before the Lord that sent me, till it be wiped out by repentance, and fleeing to the blood of Christ for pardon; so I leave it before him who confirms the word of his servants.

Use 2d. of Exhortation. I would exhort you, 1. To search and try whether or not there be one thing lacking in you.

2. That finding it out you will labour to get over it. But before I enter on this, I will propose,

Doctrine II. The one thing lacking that stands between a man and heaven may be hid from him and out of his view. This want was a thing this man was not dreaming of, till it was discovered to him by Christ. Now,

I. To confirm this point. Consider the lamentable delusion that some are under as to their state, whereby a man may be a hypocrite and not know himself to be such. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness." See also Isaiah xliv. 20. Such was the case of Laodicea. One thing God knew they lacked but they knew it not, Rev. iii. 17. How many bless themselves in their hearts whom the Lord curseth. The foolish virgins knew not that they lacked oil till it was too late to rectify the mistake; and the house on the sand was never thought to lack a sure foundation till the storm came.

2. If you consider the deceitfulness of the heart it will not be thought strange, for the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The deceitful heart can draw a vail over the one thing lacking and entertain it in the house, while the master knows it not. Many evils lurk in the heart which men do not know, till by the special operation of the Spirit they be discovered unto them. How clear doth the sin of many appear to others, who yet cannot be convinced of it themselves; how much more may it be so in those sins which lie not open to the view of the world. Let us inquire,

II. Whence it is so. It may be hid on several occasions. As,

1. Seeing spiritual sins are most subtile, and are not known till the law in its spirituality be carried home on the soul, when that one thing is of a spiritual nature it may be lying hid. So it was with Paul, he discerned not the evil of his Pharisaical duties; for he was alive without the law. A man will easily discern when he performs or omits external duties; but it is very possible he may be leaning on duties, putting them in Christ's room, and yet not know the danger of it for want of spiritual light; nay, nor see those motions of cursed self.

2. That one thing may be taken for a great duty, and their greatest impediment in the way to heaven, may be looked on as their greatest furtherance to it. Alas! it is too, too incident to blinded man to value himself on that for which God undervalues him, Acts xxvi. 9. Fearful are the effects of delusion, and dreadful are the heights to which it may go, so that Satan gets many kept in his dark prison of ignorance of Christ and of themselves with his iron fetters, which they take for God's golden chains. And thus glory in their shame, and look for salvation in that way that will ruin them.

3. That one thing often is in lawful things, and there it is hard to discover it. Many perish by lawful things. This was the ruin of the young man in the text. It was lawful for him to have great possessions, but in them his snare lay. The world was his idol

though he never saw it was so till Christ discovered it to him.—Things in themselves unlawful are quickly seen, the devil soon discovers himself by the cloven foot; but it is not so easy for people to discover their lying in a husband, wife, children, goods, or effects, but there it often lies, Luke xiv. 18—20.

4. That one thing may be negatives and omissions which are not so easily discerned as commissions.—Swearing may lie heavy on the man's conscience, while the bloody sin of unbelief sits as fast though unobserved; and yet it is that one thing that ruins the world of hearers of the gospel. There are sloth and carnal ease, what havock do they make among professors, but who sees them with that venom in them which gnaws out the bowels of the soul. On the contrary, they are hugged and they are sweet sins which people can keep with little noise, and in which they sleep and slip to hell at their own ease.

5. That one thing often goes under the name of an infirmity which though evil in itself, yet cannot keep one out of heaven. Thus it is vailed with false notions, and the venom of it hid from the eyes of men. The wise virgins slumbered, and the foolish virgins slept, thinking they were no worse than their fellows. Thus many a man deceives himself, while sin reigns in him, but he lives at ease, seeing every man hath infirmities and he hath his also. The truth is, no sin of a believer is a reigning sin, but a sin of infirmity, Rom. vi. 14; neither can a sin of infirmity properly be ascribed to a natural man, seeing he is altogether without spiritual strength. The difference lies in these. 1. Reigning sin is committed with a whole bent of will. Infirmity has but a half will, there is another principle in the will against it, Rom. vii. 19. The will, as regenerate, opposeth that to which the will, as unregenerate, carries the man; whereas there is no opposition to reigning sin, but what flows only from an unenlightened conscience. 2. Sins of infirmity are great burdens to the soul, from which it wishes to be freed, and they carry the persons to a hatred of the root of sin, which they look upon as iron fetters, Rom. vii. 24. whereas the heart is knit to sin while it reigns.

6. Self-love acts its part here, and so covers this fault, while it magnifies the good that is in men, and extenuates the evil, and is always ready to construe the best of a man's state, and keeps back the soul from a serious and impartial search of what may be lacking in it.—Thus men nourish their disease, and hug the viper in their bosoms that will gnaw out their bowels.

Lastly, There may be a judicial stroke in it, John ix. 39. Men sometimes unkindly entertain the discoveries that God makes to them of what they lack, they shut their eyes at the light, and God

strikes them blind; 2. Thess. ii. 10, 11. Their hearts cleave to it, and therefore they desire not to see it in its ugly colours, they are for peace in it at any rate, and they get it, Isaiah lxvi. 3, 4.

Use of Exhortation. 1. Let one and all of us search ourselves if there be any one thing lacking that stands between heaven and us. I would have you all going in search of this one thing.

Motive 1. Is there not need for it, when you say it may be where it is not observed. If this mortal disease may infect those who find no pain from it, does it not concern us all very nearly to search the innermost parts of our hearts with the candle of the Lord. The mortal enemy is amongst us, and may lie hid, up then and search.

2. If upon search you shall find that there is not one thing lacking, the comfort of the discovery will counterbalance the pains of the search. How comfortable a reflection had David, "I was, says he, also upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity."—And he was a man intent on searching and being searched, Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

3. It cannot be mortified till it be discovered; and if it be not mortified, it will keep you out of heaven. Search out the poison then, lest it kill you; the one thing wanting, lest it conclude you under the loss of God's favour for ever.

Lastly, God will discover it, if you do not, either here or hereafter. It will not always be kept secret. God will lead out the idol of jealousy and set it before your eyes, whether you will or not, as in the text.

Now to help you in this search I shall lay down some things that may serve to point at the one thing lacking, which is most likely to stand between heaven and you. And because, though the godly do not totally lack any thing, yet they may have one thing which they are in greatest hazard of, and that they need particularly to set themselves against, as that which comparatively is the one thing lacking. I shall lay down such helps as may be serviceable to both.

1. Consider what it is that thou hast of all things least power to resist, that is certainly the weakest side, the one thing thou lackest which of all things else threatens thy ruin most. For all the reproaches, &c. cast upon Jesus and his disciples, we never heard of Judas making any resentment, till that was cast in his way that might feed his covetousness. Men may be as brass and iron with respect to many temptations; yet are weak as water with respect to one thing. Persons may find out a sore by examining the whole body.

2. Consider what way the natural bias of the heart turns. Persons will readily find something upon which their heart fixes most

readily and quickly, such is the sin of their constitution, as lust, pride, passions, envy, covetousness. It was lust that gave David the greatest dash in his way to heaven. Whatever this be, it will be found the sin that most easily besets us.

3. Consider what that is of which the heart keeps the most obstinate hold, and is most averse to part with it. That surely is the right eye, or the right hand. There is an idol of jealousy, which, if the man be denied, he says in effect as Micah, "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?" He can less digest the want of it than the want of communion with God.—Look then if there be any thing whereof when thou art deprived, all thy other comforts, all the promises, nay, God himself cannot satisfy thee, but thy contentment stands or falls according to that thing; that doubtless is the one thing lacking, without which the man cannot rest, as Ahab could not be satisfied without Naboth's vineyard.

4. Consider what that is which thy own conscience, and the finger of God in the preaching of the word does most frequently point at, and check thee for, that is likely to be one thing. It is in this case as when a man hath a sore finger, he finds it touched oftener than any other. Double calls then require double diligence for mortification.

5. Consider what it is thy thoughts run most upon, the idol of jealousy will readily take them up most.—And therefore think what it is that ordinarily has thy last thoughts at night, and thy first thoughts in the morning, which are due to God only; that is another god, before the Lord. This is the woful carcase, where it is the thoughts of the heart will be gathered together.

6. Consider for what it is that God most frequently corrects thee, and what conscience hangs most upon in time of affliction. God ordinarily writes his indignation upon the one thing, and levels his stroke particularly against it, and that with a witness, that the guilty conscience can interpret the stroke to be for that. Consider then what that is, in respect of which thou art as a silly dove that still haunts the place where she has been robbed of her young, Hosea vii. 11, 12. That which thou wilt still be handling, though thy fingers have been often burnt in reaching to it. Compare Hosea xiv. 3. "Ashur shall not save us, neither will we ride upon horses, nor say any more to the works of our hands, ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

7. What it is in which thy will opposes most the will of God, in which thou hast greatest difficulty to say, *the will of the Lord be done*, which is the great obstacle in thy resignation to the will of God, Mark x. 21, 22. Is there one thing, that thou couldst part with

thy will in all things but in it: that is the one thing lacking. Jonah discovered his weak side to be pride, and love of his credit, this way. And God crossed with him till he was brought fairly to yield it to the Lord. That same was Ahithophel's. God crossed with him, but he kept to the point till he died, desperately hanging himself, because he could not get his own will and his counsel was not taken.

8. Consider what that lust is, that like Joseph's sheaf all other lusts must bow to it. That is it which commands in chief, and is the lust upon the throne. There may be in men's hearts some one or other corruption that is like the great channel into which other lusts, as so many little brooks, disburden themselves. He to whom the world is the one thing needful, will sacrifice ease, luxury, and almost every thing to his favourite object, and will make stepping-stones of all other things to get at it. He who is setting up for self-righteousness will make many lusts fall a sacrifice to it, and build that lust with the spoil of others. For one lust may be contrary to another, and for the principal one all the rest are cut and carved as may best suit it.

9. Consider what is that which is the greatest hinderance of your duties towards God, that either keeps you back from them as the world made Demas forsake God, or that mars them so that they are performed very heartlessly; that looks like to be the one thing, 1 Sam. ii. 24—29. What lies on the heart as the one thing, will readily be found to leave the marks of it on the several duties men perform.

10. Consider what that is in which you can rest satisfied if you have it; though you have not God in it to rest in. There may be one thing the want whereof squeezes all the comfort and satisfaction out of other things to a man. This was the case with Haman. All his honours availed him nothing while he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Nothing can satisfy a proud man when he is in disgrace. But the enjoyment of their object though they have not God in it gives them rest. Thus the rich man said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Surely that is the idol. Thus we may all see what that one thing lacking totally or partially is with us.

I would exhort you to set yourselves against that one thing to get over it; and prove yourselves sincere by your victory over it. And to urge this, I shall propose,

Doctrine III. That the lack of that one thing will spoil all the other good things we have. One thing thou lackest which stands

effectually between you and eternal life, and draws a black stroke through all those other things which you have.

I shall show you how that one thing lacking totally and not got over sincerely, though it cannot be got over perfectly till death, spoils all other things. It doth this two ways, by way of evidence, and by way of efficacy.

I. It spoils all by way of evidence. It will disprove all your evidences for heaven which you pretend to be enough, it will blot them out and will be a contrary evidence that will prove all the rest false. There are these six sad conclusions, that one thing lacking will prove against you.

Conclusion 1. That you are yet in the black state of nature, not born again, not new creatures for all the other things you have attained. This conclusion is infallibly true, being grounded on express scripture. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." For the new creature from the time of its birth is perfect in parts, though not in degrees. The new man is furnished with all the integral parts, though none of them are come to their full growth. There is something lacking in every part of the new man, but no part altogether lacking. Compare 1 Thess. iii. 10. with 2 Pet. i. 9. therefore they are not new creatures in whom one thing is lacking.

This conclusion draws deep. "For except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If you be not born again you are not the sons of God, and if so, you have no right to the inheritance. See then how this one thing will shut you out of heaven.

2. That you are but hypocrites and not sincere Christians for all the length you have come, Psal. xviii. 23. and cxix. 6. Since Christians are universal in their obedience, and will not entertain any one idol, but part with those that are dearest to them. She is an adulteress that takes another instead of her husband. None can sincerely close with Christ, but those that are content to part with all their idols for him, and all true Christians do so, Matth. xiii. 45, 46.

This goes deep, for if you are hypocrites what avails your religion before the Lord? You are in some sort in a worse case than the openly profane. You are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot; and hell, not heaven, will be your lodging place. See whither the one thing lacking will carry you: for hypocrites shall have their portion in the place where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. That you do not so much as one duty right, or so as to serve the Lord acceptably in any one thing, Isa. i. 11, 15. The reason is, it is not out of love to God, nor from respect to his command that

you do what you do; because if it were so, you would regard his authority in that one thing as well as in other things, and true love to God would not allow you to set any thing in his room, James ii. 11.

This is a heavy conclusion, what reward can they look for but wrath, that do nothing pleasing in the sight of God, that make themselves and not God their principle and end?

4. That you have not the spirit of Christ in you, however elevated you may sometimes seem to be; and the reason is, because wherever the spirit of Christ dwells he brings forth the fruits of holiness, and these are in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. —Where then there is only some goodness, and not all goodness, as where one thing is lacking, the spirit is not there. And that draws deep, leaving you among sensualists, and cuts off all your pretensions to Christ, for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if without Christ, then without the favour of God, without the covenant, without hope, Eph. ii. 12. So does one thing lacking deprive of all.

5. That you are not truly mortified, but under the reigning power of sin; the reason is plain, because your right eye sins are yet untouched. True mortification is universal. While one member is alive the body is not dead. Death takes the life out of every part and so doth true mortification. While one lust is on the throne, Christ is not there. Sin can keep its dominion by one lust as well as by many.

This is a sad conclusion. It makes you none of Christ's, leaves you under the rigour of the law of works, and leaves you no appeal to grace, and binds you over wholly to hell fire, Matth. v. 29; and so far by the saving of one thing, thou eternally losest all.

5. That you are despisers of the whole law of God and of the whole yoke of Christ, James ii. 10, 11. As the breaking of one link breaks the whole chain. The authority of God is stamped upon all his commandments, and he that despiseth it in one despiseth it in all.

This draws deep, showing that you have no kindly respect to any of his laws, and so that they are not written in your hearts, consequently that he is not your God, and therefore you are not his people. How dreadful must it be to entertain that which blots out your name from amongst the people of God.

II. It mars or spoils all by way of efficacy. As we say of the want of original righteousness, so of this, it is not a pure and idle want, but an active want, that has a most malignant influence, as the want of sight makes the whole body full of darkness.

1. It spoils the acceptance of all your other duties before the Lord. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." This the prophet Haggai teacheth the Jews by a similitude taken from the ceremonial law, chap. ii. 11—14. The many good things which we have, will not sanctify one thing lacking; but one thing lacking will pollute all our other good things. Saul made dreadful havock among the Amalekites, but the sparing of Agag, the bleating of the sheep, marred the acceptance of all. Will the putting away of many lovers while one is still retained satisfy a jealous husband? no more will the putting away of many lusts while one is retained satisfy a jealous God.

2. It quite mars our pretensions to true repentance and true holiness, for it is of the nature of these to be universal, so as if they be not, they are no more true repentance and holiness. Repentance is a turning from every idol as being from sin, because it is sin, so holiness has respect to all God's commandments. As a man cannot come to a city, unless he go the whole way; to stand at the gate keeps him out the same as if he had stopped at a greater distance. Thus goes the reformation of many.

3. It is an abiding root of universal apostacy. It is enough to keep the soul in Satan's grasp still, and to be in due time an engine for overturning all the fair fabric of their partial religion as in Judas and Demas. That house can never stand sure that lacks a foundation. Hence men of the greatest attainments have lost all, to which the one thing needful has still been the handle. "Therefore we ought to give the most earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

4. It still carries the soul off from God, and mars its resting in him alone as the chief good. The evil heart of unbelief leads to depart from the living God. As it is impossible for a man to grasp heaven and earth in his arms at once, or to fix his eyes on the heavens and earth at once; so the soul cannot fix the heart upon one idol, but that must take it off from the Lord. For no man can serve two masters. Hence if the soul would rest in the Lord, it must forego all others, Psal. xlv. 11.

Lastly, It will effectually mar salvation. One sin cleaved unto will ruin the soul as well as a thousand. It keeps the soul from Christ, and so leaves the man under the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 10. One thing lacking will be a sufficient bar to hold men out of heaven. A right eye spared will cost the whole body's being cast into hell fire, Matth. v. 29.

Use. Let me then renew the exhortation to you touching that one thing. Set yourselves particularly against it, to fill up that want,

to get over that particular idol, to pluck out that right eye. Here is matter of exercise to you which may be near your hearts. You have heard motives to stir up to this duty. I shall only farther propose.

1. Is it not a sad matter to lose all for one thing, to lose all the good that is in you, and done by you and your souls too, and all for one thing? O what a cursed idol is that to which you will offer such a costly sacrifice? What man in his senses, would not rather pluck out an eye, than lose his life by the keeping of it. It is a dear bought enjoyment of an idol that is bought at such a rate.

2. Is it not sad to be so near heaven and yet miss it? Have you come all the way and only one step remains, and yet you will stand there? Why not let go that idol as well as the rest? Why so far and no farther? O will you fall from the very threshold of heaven? Are the children brought to the birth and must they die there?

3. What better will you be than those that have nothing? If a man perish, what better is he if he perish in a brook than in a sea. If you go to hell for one thing, what are you the better for going so far in the way to heaven. O sad, to have many items in religion all dashed out in one *but*, in the end.

Directions.—1. Labour in the first place to get the deep impressions of the evil of this one thing fixed on your spirits. That is the first wedge to be driven to separate your souls from it. Consider the evil of it, as contrary to the holy nature of God. Consider the evil that attends it as before explained. Till once the evil of sin be seen, the heart will never be willing to part with it. And look to the Lord for sight in this particular and meditate upon it.

2. Set yourself against it in a way of believing. The law makes nothing perfect. We must go against it as David against Goliah, and fight this battle under the banner of Christ. "I can do all things, says Paul, through Christ which strengtheneth me." Now to do this, we must be emptied of ourselves, stripped of confidence in ourselves for victory in that point as in all others. There is reason for it, for if we are not able to turn away the face of the least, far less of the greatest of the devil's captains, 2 Cor. iii. 5. and then we are in a fair way to get over it. "For his grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is made perfect in weakness." The more we see our own weakness, the stronger we are. We must by faith take hold on Christ for all: so particularly that one thing. And we must take himself for it, and so make a blessed exchange of that idol to Christ. The heart of man must needs have something to rest in, and it must always appear to be for something bet-

ter that we make the change. Then Christ in his riches and glory must be put in the balance with the one thing, and when the soul sees the transcendent excellency of Christ, that will captivate the affections from the one thing to Christ, as the pearl of great price; for till the soul put Christ in the room of that one thing, the heart will never get over it.

We must take him in all his offices, for it in particular, and that first as a Prophet. When we are to grapple with that one thing, look to Christ as a prophet in that particular, giving yourself up to him to be taught and enlightened in the knowledge of the evil of it the way to be led over it. This is the way to bring a strengthening light into your soul against it. "He that followeth me, saith Jesus, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." See David's experience, Psal. xvii. 4. But when men will hold fast their sin, then their habitation is in the midst of deceit, *through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord.*

As your Priest, as for all, so for that particular, were you to look to the merit of his blood, and that first for the pardon of it, as taking its guilt; and next for sanctification, as producing the removal of the power of sin, and of the Spirit for that end. For this blood cleanseth us from all sin. Thus the blood of Christ purgeth sin; as when his side was pierced, blood and water came out together; so when the soul receives a pierced Christ by faith, his blood operates in the soul both pardon and purity, Heb. ix. 14. And as the fire that burned the incense, was brought from the altar of burnt offering, so the spirit that burns up corruptions flows from Christ sacrificed for us, in whom our old man was virtually crucified with him. Look to him also in his intercession. That is a part of what he intercedes for, victory to his people in their combats. He sits in heaven as Moses did on the top of the hill while they fight in the valley, Exod. xvii. 11. and we should combat our lusts with our eye on him, as at the Father's right hand, concerned for us in the combat.

Look to him also as a King, and your King for that in particular, and this do when first under the sense of your inability to overcome it, and with a desire to have it rooted out, you lay it before him, that he may exert his kingly power in subduing it; and forasmuch as he hath offered himself to subdue sin to all that will, accept of him as yours with an eye to that very thing, saying, *Turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.* This is to put yourself under his shadow.—And next, when under the assaults you flee to him for protection, as the damsel attacked in the fields, crying for help from him.

Again, We must do all this, believing the promises suited to that case. The word of promise is excellent armour for victory over sin. The promise assures us of victory and so strengthens the battle. It brings in the bosom of it, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." It puts God's faithfulness and the believer's victory in one bottom, so that if any fail, both fail together. God has made the promise, Micah vii. 19. He will subdue our iniquities, and it is our duty to put him in remembrance of it. Say not the promises belong to you, if you be not willing to part with all sin and take Christ. You may as well think to fight casting away your weapons, as to overcome sin not believing the promises. This is to set against it in the way of believing.

Direction 3. Join prayer with fasting upon that particular account. It is reasonable the remedy be proportioned to the disease. Pray much against it always. Let it be a chief matter of concern; and set some time apart by yourselves alone, to wrestle with God against that very thing, and enter into resolutions against it in the strength of the Lord. The wall should surely be strongest where the water beats with the greatest violence.

Lastly, Keep a strict watch against it, beware of occasions to it, Rom. xiii. 14. This will starve and weaken it. Resist it in the first motions thereof. It is with sin as with a fire, the longer it burns, the stronger it grows; and as a water, the farther it runs, it becomes the larger. If we cannot quench a spark, how shall we quench a flame. Be resolute then, for it is possible to overcome it. Amen.

Ettrick, September, 1710.

[Same Subject Continued.]

AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

SERMON XXXIII.

MARK X. 21. (Second clause.)

Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.

DOCTRINE I.

GOD will readily meet people with a special trial in the one thing lacking. They will likely be struck on the sore heel, and get strokes there, where they are least able to endure them.

I shall first show how this is done, and then give reasons for the doctrine.

I. I am to show how this is done. The Lord has many ways of doing it.

1. Sometimes in the fury of his jealousy, he removes the idol of jealousy out of the way. Men set their hearts on some things in preference to others, and God directs his hand against these things in a special manner. He takes from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters. They lay themselves down to rest in something besides God, and he draws the pillow from under their head. There is not a readier way to make people quit of a thing, than to make an idol of it.

2. Sometimes by the reducing of a man to the necessity of quitting either that one thing, or his profession and pretension to Christ, as in the text. This touches a man to the quick. When Christ and the world go together, a man may follow both with ease, and get his good name among others, and opinion of himself, kept up; but when they part, he must betake himself to one of them only, and either lose that limb or lose the whole body, which is hard work go as it will. People are readily brought into this in the time of a storm on the church: even as where there is a hole in a house the storm will seek in there, though it may escape notice in the summer.

A 3d way is, the wind is still blowing in a man's face with respect to that one thing, providence crossing him in it, and denying it to him, which makes a combat betwixt providence and the man's heart, the one pressing forward, the other driving back. So it was in Jonah's case. A man sets his heart on one thing above all things; and God denies him that one thing above all things. There is a crook in his lot, his heart cannot bend to it, and God will not make it straight; and let him do what he will it remains still crooked; for God will have the man's heart either bow to it or break, Eccles. i. 15. see Hosea ii. 6, 7.

A 4th way is, God's making men's plague and punishment arise out of their sin, that one thing lacking, that they are most grievously wounded with the serpent they have hugged most. The Jews preferred Cæsar to Christ, and God made Cæsar their scourge. Many times God makes people's idols to be the great crosses they have in the world. Thus Isaac's fond love to Esau was punished, Gen. xxv. 28. compare chap. xxvi. 35.—Whatever gets more of the heart than God gets, will readily turn upon the person himself with a stroke.

A 5th way is, by a flood of temptation beating on a man's weak side. That one thing may lie undiscerned while there is no temptation to draw it forth; but temptation will exhibit a man in his own

colours, witness Judas and Demas. Whatever it be a man lacks, the storm of temptation will readily find it out. There will not want temptations suitable to the sin. So they get temptations of that sort, which of all they are the least able to resist. Let us now,

II. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

1. Hereby the Lord vindicates the glory of his omniscience, levelling the stroke against that which has the chief room in the heart, he thereby discovers a special eye on the idol of jealousy, and teacheth men that nothing can be so hid or smoothed over, but he will know it thoroughly. Of the church of Thyatira he says, "I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give to every one of you according to your works."

2. Because God hath a special hatred of that one thing, and that because it is a sin to which the heart cleaves most; and always the more the heart cleaves to any thing, the more is the Lord provoked. It is that which of all things takes up his room in the heart most; no wonder then a holy God leaves special marks of indignation upon it.

3. For the discovery of their state before the Lord. Hereby God discovers hypocrites, while these strokes on that one thing lacking makes the heart cleave more fast to it, and discovers that hold which it hath of the heart. This may be the mean whereby God discovers a person's own naughtiness to himself. And hereby the sincerity of others is discovered, while they forego that which otherwise they have least will to part with at God's command, Psal. xviii. 23. This makes them like Abraham who showed that he feared God by not withholding his only Son from him.

4. To wean their hearts from it, Hosea ii. 6, 7.—God refuseth to give men ease in their idol of jealousy that they may give up with it. He puts gall in the breast of the one thing, that the heart may be weaned from it. With the more ease one enjoys an idol, it grows the stronger; but the more strokes that are made on it, it is in the fairer way to be broken.

Use of information. 1. The way to remove any thing from us, or to make it uneasy to us is to make an idol of it. The fixing of the heart upon any thing inordinately, is that which makes it a mark to the arrows of God, Ezek. xxiv. 25. So here, the world is his idol, and now he must part with it or God's favour.

2. Where there is one thing lacking, there is an open fountain of much misery. Where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. What is said 1 Tim. vi. 10. we may here apply; "The love of money is the root of all evil." Men by that one thing

lay themselves open to sharp trials from God, as in the text, and to terrible temptations from the devil. While one thing is lacking, there is something for a holy God to aim his stroke particularly against; and something for Satan to fix his temptation where it will most surely take effect.

3. Then there is no lasting rest in the bosom of an idol. There will always be such a reckoning at length as Samson got. They will not rest very long there, but they will find thorns under their heads. Stolen waters may be sweet a while, but they will be bitterness in the end.

4. This may let you see the evil in that one thing lacking. It cannot but be singularly evil which he levels his stroke against. And such is that idol be what it will. It is that which is set up specially in God's room that gets the cream of the affections, and is the great hinderance between people and heaven.

5. Then where you find you are trysted with special trials, look that your sin lie not in that, wherein your affection lies. It will readily be found so. If the Lord in his providence cross thee in such a thing, look that the heart hath not been too much wedded to it. If you meet with many temptations in one particular, take heed that be not a very weak side of yours, that you must either get made stronger, or you will lose all.

Use 2d. of Exhortation. 1. If there be any side in thee weaker than another, then expect a trial on that side.

2. When thou art meeting with trials in that way, join in with the hand of God against that one thing lacking. If you have discovered the one thing, you may likewise see how the Lord is trysting you with special trials in that point. When then God is at work against it, be you so too.

Motive 1. Not a trial you meet with in that way, but it is the voice of God to you to mortify it. If you find God has made a wall, as Hosea ii. 7. it is for that end that you may return. Why would he stop you or make your way uneasy, if he were not calling you to return.

2. You have the advantage of help towards the victory over it. The more bitter God makes it to you, it may be the easier to part with it.

3. If you continue it still, take heed that the vizor be not pulled off your face by a temptation suited as in the text.

Lastly, The Lord in that case hath you upon your trials for eternity; and if you be right metal you will not perish in the furnace: you will stand by resting on God, whatever he take from you. You will rather quit the one thing than Christ.

Doctrine II.—The world is the one thing that effectually stands between many professors and heaven.—Here I shall,

I. Show what of the world it is that stands between many professors and heaven.

II. How the world effectually stands betwixt men and heaven.

III. How this comes to be the *one thing*, that commonly stands between professors and heaven. And then add some improvement. I am then,

I. To shew what of the world it is that stands between many professors and heaven. I shall not here speak of the god of the world, his immediate temptations; nor of the men of the world, their persecutions, oppressions, reproaches, ill example, and the like, all which have a dreadful influence; but confine myself to the things of the world, which are what the text aims at. Now this monstrous beast pushes men out of the way to heaven with two horns. These are,

1. The pleasures of the world. These are great impediments in the way to heaven. They are Satan's silken cords by which he draws many after him. There is first the pleasures of the eye, which the apostle John calls *the lust of the eyes*. By these doors the heart often breaks forth and unites itself to the world, and separates from God. Therefore Job *made a covenant with his eyes*, that they should not be panders to the lusts of his heart. The carnal heart is as a bird in a cage, whose door the eyes are, that scarcely can be sooner opened on objects agreeable to the carnal disposition, but as soon the heart flies out at them. A very gourd stole away the heart of Jonah. Two graceless sons of Eli were a great snare to him.

Add to these the pleasures of the flesh, which are more grossly sensual, arising chiefly from the senses of tasting and touching, 1 John ii. 16. These often drown the soul in perdition. They are such as gluttony, drunkenness, and all sorts of sensuality in which the sensual appetite seeks its satisfaction. This induced Paul "to keep under his body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway." These two ruined Adam and the professors of the old world. Love of pleasure and a form of godliness may meet in the same persons, even as certain fowls sometimes fly in the air, and sometimes swim in the water, 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.

2. The profits of the world. These are thorns that choke the word, Luke viii. 14. These keep such a hold of the hearts of men that they let go their hold of Christ, Mark x. 22.

There is a snare in the having of the world. Hence Jesus said

"that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." How many are ensnared with the much business they have, which they would not have if they had not so much of the world already.—"The abundance of the rich suffereth him not to sleep." How hard is it not to embrace and set the heart upon a smiling world?

There is a snare also in the want of the world.—Hence the wise man prays against poverty, "lest he should be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain." By this snare the world drags men after it, the bait is before them and they follow it till they are caught with the hook. When the miserable world even tramples us under its feet, even then we are ready to adore it. When it flies from us we follow it. What wonder then if we love it, while it caresseth us. We proceed,

II. To show how the world effectually stands between men and heaven.

1. As it carries the heart away from God and sets it on itself, and thus the world is set in the room of God. Hence covetousness is called *idolatry*. Thus many worship the world's trinity, instead of Father, Son, and Spirit. And this is done especially three ways. When men esteem it more highly than they do God, his favour and communion with him, pursuing the world as their chief good; weighing their happiness or misery according to their having or wanting the world. Their cry still is, *who will shew us any good?* This appears in their being more satisfied in the enjoyment of the world, than ever they were in the enjoyment of God, and more cast down at the loss of it, than at the loss of the Lord's countenance.

Again, When they love it more than God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." How ardent are men's affections ordinarily to the creatures, beyond what they are to the Lord.—*They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.* Hence when God and the world stand in competition they will forsake him to gain the world. They will venture to buy a little of the world, at the rate of his displeasure.

The heart also is carried away from God, when men trust in the world more than in God. "Soul, says the rich man, thou hast goods laid up for many years, take thine ease," Mark x. 23, 24. From this we may see, that it is hard to have the world and not to trust in it. There is great need of grace to lift up the hearts of men who have full houses, to look to God for their daily bread. It is hard to have the world, and not to be secure because we have it: and we are ready to make gold our confidence. Hence, says Paul, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-

minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

2. As it diverts men's minds from heaven and eternal life, and thus carries them away from the chief thing, the great work of their salvation. "Martha, Martha, said Jesus, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful." Ah! how many are fixed to this earth, that they never get leave to look upward. God calls us to run, so as to obtain the prize, but Satan throws his golden balls on every side, and while men are busy gathering them up, they lose the prize which God sets before them. Thus men trifle away precious time, and never open their eyes till death. They are busy, very busy doing nothing. The poor how to get, and the rich how to keep and manage; and while they are thus busied, their lusts appointed of God for death, make their escape, and their souls go for them.

3. The world stands between men and heaven, as it spoils their duties egregiously, makes them unacceptable to God, and unprofitable to themselves. The destructive influence of the world upon religious duties clearly appears in a variety of respects. Sometimes the world jostles out religious duties altogether, leaves no room for them, and makes people neglect them.—Thus we find, Luke xiv. 18. that the business and enjoyments of the world prevented those that were bidden from coming to the gospel feast. Care for the body leaves no time for care about the soul. Martha's business hinders Mary's choice. Men involve themselves so deeply that they cannot get time for the concerns of their souls. The care of their house, their farm, their work, their cattle, often goes between them and their spiritual duties. Hence these persons have prayers and family exercises of religion at night, because their work is over, but none in the morning, because their business, which they reckon of greater importance, will not allow it. But if it even leaves them time, it leaves them no heart for it. Accordingly we find, that the world very much indisposeth men for religious duties, even when they have time for them. A man that is ever uttering the world's cry, *who will shew us any good*, is very unfit to offer up the saint's prayer, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* As wet wood is unfit for the fire, so the man that is drowned in worldly pleasures, is unfit for the enjoyment of the pure pleasures of communion with God. And as the troubled water is unfit to receive the image of the sun, so the heart tossed with the cares of the world, is very unfit to lay the great business of salvation to heart, and entertain communion with God in duties.

Again, The world makes the duties of these persons very lifeless

when they come to them. They are run out of breath in pursuing the world eagerly before they come to them, hence nothing remains for God but a few faint wishes, for the cream and strength of their spirits is spent on other things. Though they shut their eyes, they see still a thousand vanities, and though the door is closed the thief is in the house still, that steals away the heart, in the very time that it leaves the tongue speaking to God. And readily something will be minded when they are on their knees that had escaped them before.

Finally, The world prevents men from looking after the success of their duties. They give in their petitions to the Lord, but they are so busy with other things, that they cannot wait to see what answer they get. And thus the world in the heart makes men perform their duties as a task, or as a by-hand work.

4. The world stands between men and heaven, as it is a great enemy to the efficacy of the word upon their hearts. It prevents the entrance of the word into the heart. It is rare for the riches of this world not to make men proof against the word. And oftentimes racking crosses in the world make the word tasteless to those that are under it. By their crosses the Israelites were filled with murmurings. They embitter a carnal spirit, that knows no comfort but what is drawn out of the creatures. And as the world often prevents the entrance of the word, so it also chokes it when it hath taken some hold of them. How many convictions, resolutions of amendment, and fair blossoms of reformation have been choked among these thorns? Hands and head full of the world again, have soon emptied the heart of all good motions, and brought persons back to their wonted security. The bewitching world brings them back that have apparently been fairly set on the way to heaven. It remains,

III. To show how the world comes to be *the one thing* that commonly stands between professors and heaven.

I. Because there is a liberty allowed us to use the world, and therefore men think they cannot go wrong in this. Even religion enjoins us to be careful about it, and the march between lawful and unlawful is so small, and the hearts of men so deceitful, that they easily pass over into an excess. The world being a thing lawful in itself, the snare is not so easily seen as in other things which are in themselves absolutely forbidden. See the context.

2. Because this sin can be more easily covered than many others. It puts on a fair name of frugality and honest care about our business, and the venom of the heart's cleaving to the world does not appear to others, so that the man has something to defend his prac-

tice before men. And so gets his idol and his profession to keep to his ruin.

3. Because unsound professors never bring their hearts to rest in God, and yet bring them off the gross pollutions of the outward man, and therefore it follows of course that they rest in the world, and that is their great idol. They forsake the fountain, and therefore go to the streams. They forsake the most polluted streams, and therefore swim in those that are not so gross.

4. Because worldliness is opposite to many vices in which the profane part of the world is drowned. Such as idleness, prodigality, luxury and riot: and so while fools shun one rock they split upon another. While some men toss the world from them as a ball at their foot, they take it up as a burden on their back, while they ought only to use it as a staff in their hand, to help them on their journey to another world.

Use of Exhortation. 1. I would exhort you to search and try whether or not this be the one thing thou lackest, whether the world be your idol or not. You must know that the world may be the poor man's as well as the rich man's idol. The excessive love of the world may lodge in a poor man's breast, as well as a rich man's. They are not all rich of whom it is said, "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things." You may gather the knowledge of this, from what has been said before in general, and more particularly. 1. Does your joy and sorrow, confidence and fear, depend on the success of worldly things? then surely it is your idol, the fountain of your joy, the spring of your sorrow, Luke xii. 19. Grace will teach people to hang their joys and sorrows on another pillar, even on the God of their salvation. Hab. iii. 17. Ah! how many have felt more joy in a good bargain, than in the covenant of grace; and more sorrow in some deadly loss, than in the loss of the favour of God; and are more afraid that things go wrong with them in the world, than with their souls.

2. When people have sense of worldly things, but no proportionable sense of spiritual things, that shows that they are more taken up with the world than with their souls, Matth. xiii. 22. It is sad to think how many have as much skill as their neighbours for the management of worldly things, but are completely stupid in the things of God.

3. When the heart so cleaves to it, that it is the person's element, so that in the very duties of religion, the heart is going out after the world, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. and the time spent in these duties is wearisome, ever saying in their hearts, "when will the new moon

be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?"

4. What is it that thy heart is most bent to pursue? "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If your treasure be above, you will be most bent on securing that; if not, the world surely is thy idol, as that which lies nearest thy heart.

II. See then that this stand not betwixt heaven and you. Beware that be not the one thing lacking. Let us shake off this idol, and be denied to the world, if ever we would see heaven. I speak particularly to those that are professors.

Motive 1. The world has been the ruin of many eminent professors of religion, as Judas, Demas, and others. They followed religion, but with the world in their heart, hence by the weight of it, they fell at length, as stars from heaven. Oh! shall we not be afraid of the rocks upon which, we see that others have split before us. Look on it as a fearful root of apostacy, which while it sits fast, there is not one pin of all your religion sure. The devil has still a handle to catch you by and bring you back again, 1 Tim. iv. 10.

2. That very thing appears to be the great cause of the decay of religion, that has seized upon the professors of this generation. It is manifest that there is a great decay of religion among professors, and alas the world has a great hand in it. I will tell you three differences between professors now and formerly. Formerly God was always pulling the pillow from under their head, and that kept them awake: now they have had long ease, and they are fallen asleep. Thus, even Noah went astray in a time of ease, Gen. ix. 20, 21. In the time of persecution they were kept awake, and were concerned for the temple of God without and within them; but now our own houses go between us and our concern for it.

Formerly they cared less for the world and then they had more of it; and now they care more for the world and they have less of it. They were ready to quit with what they had for God, and he blessed what they had; now they are like to part with God for the world, and he blasts it.

Formerly enemies took it from them, and they parted with it to them freely; now God is taking it from them, and their heart goes with it. And yet he is the same God that deals with them now, that dealt with them then. Oh! is not this sad, that we should grudge it to him whatever way he is pleased to call for it.

Brethren stir up yourselves; mind heaven more, and the world less, if ever you would be recovered. Out from among the stuff, if you have a mind for the kingdom.

3. The world is the cause of many scandalous out-breakings

amongst professors, that expose religion to the scorn of a profane generation. Love of the world makes many break over the bounds of common honesty, if they can but get it secretly done. Hence so much injustice in men's dealings one with another, cheating and circumveening one another; and biting and devouring one another for trifles, lasting feuds and enmity betwixt professors: all flowing from this one thing lacking.

4. Do you not know better things to be taken up with? Is there not treasure in heaven to be sought after? The having of the world cannot make you happy, the want of it cannot make you miserable. But treasure in heaven will make you happy. Behold then on what you set your hearts. Let the profane world that know no better seek these things, but why should you who know better do so.

5. You will lose all your religion by it. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. You will finally lose heaven itself, for this is the doctrine of the text.

Ettrick, September, 1710.

[Same Subject Continued.]

AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

SERMON XXXIV.

MARK x. 21. (Second Clause.)
Sell whatsoever thou hast.

THE Papists will have this to be an evangelical counsel, not a command; that is a good work shown to us by Christ, but not commanded, only commended by him. But all the counsels of God are commands, Rev. i. 30, 31. and all perfection is commanded peremptorily, Matth. v. 48. And for the one before us, it is a plain command peremptorily obliging him to obedience. True, it is not an universal command, but personal and explanatory, to discover the worldliness of this covetous wretch; and God having called for this at his hands, he could no more possess them with a good conscience. Hence in general

Doctrine III. It is the duty of all to sit so loose to whatever they have in the world, as to be ready to part with it at the call of God. I will show,

I. When it is that people have a call from God to part with what they have. Here I remark,

1. That when in the holy providence of God, it comes to this, that people must either sin or suffer; when they must either part with their goods, or part with a good conscience, then God calls us to part with what we have. Hence we read, that in such times, "the saints took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." At such times all that is called for and kept back, is robbed from, and cursed by God. It is not long since the violence of persecutors brought professors to this strait, and we know not how soon it may again be the case. But we must give it to them, though it be not theirs; for it is no longer ours than we can keep it without sin. The blood of the soul is such watering to what we have, that we cannot expect that it will thrive after. The world is the garment, which like Joseph, we must leave behind us, when we cannot retain it without sin.

2. When needy objects present themselves to us, and we are in capacity to help them, then God calls us to part with it to them. Hence it is said, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again." It is a dangerous thing to refuse God a loan. The poor have a right to a portion of our goods, by virtue of the command of God, who hath given them to us with this burden, as the duty which we owe to him of whom we hold, as Lord of the earth. This is a time in which we have many such calls, let us then take heed we keep not back what God is seeking from us. "For whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." Even then though people should be straitened themselves, yet let us remember how the deep poverty of the Macedonians, abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3. When what people have hath been acquired unjustly; what is got unjustly is not ours in the sight of God, and therefore God calls us to part with it again. Zaccheus when converted said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Whatever is got unjustly is a moth among the rest, and brings a curse with it.—Surely they have a slippery hold of what they have, that possess other people's property as their own. Unjust dealing makes many persons' property go away from them very suddenly.

Have not our eyes seen the ill gotten goods of persecutors and others, that have enriched themselves with the spoils of the Lord's people, vanish away from among their hands by virtue of a secret curse. How often do estates go from hand to hand, being purchased so much by injustice and oppression, which they will not restore, and God makes them vomit it up again. "The wicked man hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly." In such a case then, both conscience and interest call for parting with it, Job xx. 10.

4. When God by his providence is pulling it from us. Then it becomes us to say with Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Sometimes God lays comforts to our hands, sometimes he returns and calls for his own again; then we should be ready to part with them. This is a day, in which God has many on their trials this way, take heed that you behave under them. When God is pulling away with his hand, let not your hearts draw against him. Never cast out with God and heaven for this world's goods; never have a worse thought of him and his way, because he will have back his own again, but thank him for what he leaves you. Let us now,

II. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

1. Because it is the command of God. "Love not the world, saith he, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." He hath placed us in the world, and he commands us to sit loose to it. The authority of God should sway us. They sit too fast who are not ready to rise at his call.

2. Because he hath power to take from us whatsoever we have. He hath a right to it. It is his own, and may he not do with his own what he pleaseth?—Whatsoever he hath given us, he hath not denuded himself of the right to it. The use of it during his pleasure is ours, the property his. He is also able to take it from us, whether we will or not. Keep as fast a hold as you can, God can easily divide you and it. And indeed people are never more exposed to this, than when they hold very fast. Now what reason, what wisdom in not sitting loose to that to which God hath still a right, and is perfectly able to take whenever he pleaseth.

3. Because he hath given us the use of what we have on no other terms, but to part with it when he calls for it again. It is then a loan more properly than a gift. We are not to sit so loose to grace, for it is an irrevocable gift. *The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.* But for the world we are tenants at will, and he may

raise us at any time, nor did he ever set us down upon other terms. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." God hath stamped uncertainty upon all our enjoyments, which, when we look to them, tells us to keep a loose hold of them.

4. Because otherwise we put them in God's stead, and are therefore guilty of idolatry. Therefore it is said, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* For if there be any thing which we are not ready to part with at God's call, then there is something we love more than God, seeing we will rather displease him than part with it. How can we say we love him, when we will not part with what we have for his sake? Is there any thing to be laid in the balance with his favour? Is there any thing can compensate the loss of it? Any thing at the rate of which his frowns are purchased, that ought to be regarded.

5. Because there is nothing worthy of its room with us, after God has called for it from us. For it cannot be expected that God and it will lodge together after. "Neither will I be with you any more, said God to the Israelites, until you take away the accursed thing from among you." Whatever is thus kept will be fair to be a plague to you. Laying up often proves a plague, when God calls to laying out. "There is, says the wise man, a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail." See the end of the rich man, Luke xvi. 19—23. Take heed that what you keep up, do not go a worse way and take away more with it, Mal. iii. 8—10. God takes away all the good out of that which people cannot part with for him.

6. Because we must part with it sooner or later, and this is the most pleasant way of parting with it. It is true, people may be longer in parting with it. But they will never part with it so easily as that way. Ripe fruit falls easily from the tree, when the unripe must be violently plucked. When the heart is loosed from what we have, it is easy letting it away, by what it is when the heart holds by it, till it is forced to let it go.—Again, we can never part with it so honourably. The liberality of the Macedonians was a clear evidence of the grace of God bestowed upon them. No thanks to you when God takes it from you, whether you will or not. People must let go what they have when they are utterly unable to keep it any longer. Oh! how honourable is it to forsake the world at God's call, Song iv. 8.

Use of Exhortation. O then sit loose to the world and whatsoever you have in it. Sell whatsoever you have in this respect. There is

a twofold spiritual market spoken of in the scriptures. The first is that in which sinners are called to buy whatsoever they want. "I counsel thee, saith Jesus, to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see." This market is opened in the gospel, and God has stored it with whatsoever may suit our necessities. The second market is that in which sinners are to sell whatsoever they have.—This market is mentioned, Matth. xiii. 44.—46. All that have a mind for heaven must trade in both these markets. It is the last of these of which I now speak, and invite you to trade in. I shall speak of five things respecting this market.

I. The opening of this market. This God himself hath done by open proclamation in his word, bearing two things.

1. That whosoever will bring whatsoever they have to this market and sell it, it shall be bought, and they shall get an upmaking price for it, a thousand times more than it is worth. See the text. See also Matth. xix. 29. Matth. vi. 19, 20. Whoso will thus lay out their treasures in earth for God, shall lay up treasures in heaven. Is not this an engaging market?

2. That all are obliged to bring whatsoever they have to it, and sell it there. So says the text. It is laid on us as a peremptory duty, thus to sell all, Song iv. 8. 1 John ii. 15. It is not left to our option whether we will do it or not, but enjoined with certification of God's highest displeasure if we do it not, Matth. xvi. 25, 26. And there are many who are set up as monuments of God's indignation, because they would not do it.

II. Who is the buyer? In the other market God is the seller, and sinners are the buyers: here God is the buyer, the sinner the seller. It is the Lord, the happy merchant resigns it, whomsoever he employs to receive it. God can employ the wind, water, fire, enemies, thieves, oppressors, devils, death, and the like, to receive it. But it is to himself that it goes. *For he gave and he taketh away.* It is he that payeth the price, *though not of debt, yet of grace,* even *treasures in heaven.* "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is God that makes the offer for it, and strikes hands with the sinner for the up-making reward. Now who would refuse to part with all to him, who leaves it for the most part, and his blessing with it unto the sinner for a long time, when once it is given up to him, and they are ready to part with it. No sooner the soul enters home to Christ, but it lays all down at his feet, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do," and he leaves it.

with them till he see need to call for it. Again, yea, he never actually takes it from them, but when it is good for them to want it.—"For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." When Isaiah intimated to Hezekiah, the judgments that were to come upon his family and kingdom, the king said, "Good is the will of the Lord which thou hast spoken; he said, moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days." So indeed runs the promise. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." All is for their good, *for all things are theirs*. And faith will make the soul say, He doth all things well. All is best that he doth.

III. Where is this market kept? This sale of all to God is made in the heart of the sinner. It is in the innermost parts of the soul that this solemn transaction passeth. When God begins to deal with a soul, he puts the soul out of its sinful rest, and then all that a man hath, is brought out and viewed in the heart. The Saviour comes with his gold tried in the fire, and offers the exchange, and the soul seeing the emptiness of whatsoever it hath, sells, renounces, and gives over all to the Lord, and consents to the blessed offer. And so necessary is this, that if it were most solemnly made by the tongue, or at a communion table, if it be not done in the heart, it is no bargain. But however secretly it is managed, there are two witnesses to it. These are 1st, The man's own spirit who knoweth the things of a man. "O my soul, says David, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord." This is as a thousand witnesses, and can often condescend on time and place, where this solemn bargain was made. The 2d, Is the Spirit of God, who is a joint witness with our spirit. "For the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." He likewise seals the blessed bargain, as the privy seal of heaven. "For we are sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." Thus the bargain is secretly ratified. And in the sacraments it is publicly sealed, both on God's part and the sinner's part. In these the sinner renounceth the devil, the world, and the flesh, and openly declares his willingness to part with all for Christ.

IV. What are these things we must sell in this market. It is whatsoever we have in this world. We must sit so loose to it as to be ready to part with it whenever God calls for them at our hands. There must be nothing but what we thus sell in affection. Particularly, 1st. Our nearest relations. "If any man, saith Christ, come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." True, we are to love them, and that as ourselves, yet

not as our God, and therefore we must be ready to part with them at his call. It was the commendation of Levi, that in the cause of God, he regarded none of these, Deut. xxxiii. 9. If thou be a true Christian, if God should take away husband, wife, children, and other relatives from thee, it would be but the delivering up of what thou didst solemnly part with to him, when you closed with Christ. O what fast holds do we keep of these things! How unready to part with them! How ready to quarrel with the Lord upon these things! but consider our Lord's words, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."

2. Our goods and possessions be they great or small, lest we be like him of whom the text speaks, ver. 22. We must part with all to the Lord, houses, and lands, and goods, and be ready to part with them at a call, and lay them all down at the Lord's feet that he may dispose of them as he will. Though our idols were of gold, they must be sold off as thick clay that can do nothing but lade us, when God calls for them. *For no man can serve two masters.* In the day you take God for your Lord, you must renounce mammon's Lordship.

3. Our worldly pleasures and satisfactions. These also must be laid down at the Lord's feet; and we content to be without them, as well as with them, and never to launch so far, but when God calls we be ready to come ashore. If God shall please to deny us even our lawful desires, mingle our drink with gall and make us of those that never eat with pleasure, we must be ready to give up with what he sees not meet to let us keep.

4. Our credit and esteem is in the world. This is a great mercy in itself. *For a good name is better than precious ointment.* But it is oftentimes a great idol, so that the credit of many goes between God and them. But we must lay it at the Lord's feet among other things. There are few that have much of it but they suffer an eclipse of it some time or other. God even sends for it, and sometimes to be a stepping-stone to his glory. We should not refuse it to him, but be content to follow him through ill as well as good report. They have not made this sale that are not content to part with it at his call, and even lie down among the pots till he himself bring them out again.

5. Our liberty and ease. "I am ready, said Paul, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The flesh cries, man spare thyself; but the Spirit offers the flesh to the Lord, that he may dispose of it as he will. It is a mercy to have liberty and ease, but we must be ready to part with

them if we should never get an easy hour, but be hunted as partridges, till we get to heaven. He that loves his liberty so as not to part with it at God's call is yet the devil's bond slave, and has not been at this market.

Lastly, Our very life must be brought hither and sold. For unless a man hate *his own life also*, saith Jesus, *he cannot be my disciple.* You must give your bodies to the Lord, not only for service, but for a sacrifice also if he requires them. And when you have made this bargain it is no dear purchase, Acts xx. 24.—There are none that go to heaven, but are martyrs either in affection or action. Perhaps the Lord may have use for your strength, beauty, leg, or limb, and perhaps for your blood. You must not stand with him for any of these things, but make them his by resignation; and when he calls for his own let him have it with good-will. Most probably he will not seek your life, but in a natural way, but you must be ready so as to part with it, if he call for it. "I am ready, said Paul, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

V. In what this sale consists.

1. In the heart's renouncing its property in these things, Matth. xvi. 24. These things the heart of man naturally looks upon, and holds as its own, as suited to its corrupt state; and therefore its own by choice, Luke xii. 19. Hence so many carnal *my's*, my corn, my cattle, &c. but not a word of my God among them all, Hos. ii. 5. Now there must be a selling of them in affection. The heart must quit its firm hold of them, and so be loosed from them, the bonds of iniquity that bound the heart and the world together being broken. "If any man, said Jesus, come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

2. In the heart's resigning of these things unto the Lord, saying with Paul, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do.* The soul must thus give up all unto the Lord, that he may do with them as with his own, what he pleaseth, 1 Sam. iii. 18. 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. No soul closeth with Christ aright, who does not lay all its enjoyments, even life itself at his feet. These were the man's gods before, now they are laid on the altar for sacrifices to the true God, and the man is ready to surrender them all to him.

3. The heart's accepting of the treasure in heaven, for and instead of them, so says the text, *thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* God does not desire us, nor will the heart part with these but for something better, Matth. xiii. 44—46. Thus the heart riseth from off the earth and embraceth heaven. And the former my's are

changed nnto my Lord, and my God. But treasure in heaven is far off from them. How then can they accept of it? Answer, Many a good bargain is made, where there is not hand payment. But they get a present right to heaven and all the treasure.—*All things are theirs, and they are Christ's.* They are immediately heirs of glory. "For to as many as receive him, Jesus gives power to become the sons of God. And if children, heirs, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." They have then a right to all the weight of glory. They have also God's bond of payment, and what though he take a day, it will be punctually kept. All the promises are theirs. They get the earnest in hand. "After they believe, they are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." Thus as the spirit of the world goes out, the Spirit of the Lord comes in. Now this earnest is both part of the price, and a pledge of the rest. Yea, they get the chief, the best part of the treasure in hand, Matth. xiii. 45, 46. The one pearl of great price. Christ is theirs, who is God's unspeakable gift, he is the great leading and comprehensive one of all. Thus is that blessed bargain made.

VI. How is this sale to be managed. If you would manage it right,

1. You must sell wholesale. God will not bargain for parcels. The text is express. *All or nothing.*—God needs none of these things. It is your heart only that he is seeking: and he would buy up these things that your hearts may not be led away with them. Now the heart may go a whoring after one as well as after many; therefore if there be any one thing, which thou wouldst keep up, God is set to have that by all the rest; and if you will not give it to him, he will take it, and give you nothing for it but wrath.

2. You must not value your wares, nor think God in your debt when you resign these things to him. We can pay no proper price for heaven. *The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Is there any proportion betwixt what we have, and the weight of glory. Besides we do but give him his own in this case; and we are in his debt for grace to induce us to part with them. "But who am I, said David, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." This is no proper sale, but all is of grace. If you give up what you have with an opinion of merit, you will lose it and your reward also: it will dye your blood (though you should give it) as black as hell.

3. You must sell willingly, God loves a cheerful giver. If it be not done with the whole heart, it is not done at all to purpose. It

is all one among men whether the seller be willing to part with his goods or not, if he but say the word it is enough. It is not so here.—This transaction is done in the heart; and by the heart. And if the heart do not give up with these things, though the hands deliver them up, you cannot look for the treasure in heaven.

4. You must do it in the view and in the faith of a treasure in heaven. If this man in the text had possessed the faith of this, he had not gone away sorrowful. God loves to be trusted. This was the thing which made the possessors part with their goods, and the martyrs with their lives. "They knew that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Yea, they did not accept deliverance from death, that they might obtain a better resurrection." If we had the faith of this, we would part with what we have more cheerfully than we do.

5. Absolutely and for ever without thoughts of claiming our possession again. It is not for a time we must make this bargain as many unfaithfully do at a communion, or some solemn time, and just return as they were, taking as firm a hold of the world as ever, 2 Peter ii. 22. But the treasure in heaven must be an eternal covering of the eyes to you.

Lastly, presently. "To-day if you will hear his voice, then harden not your hearts." The things to be sold are now in your hand, you have it in your power to part with them. But perhaps this night they may be required at your hand; they may be taken from you, and then you will not have them to sell. We cannot promise you this market to-morrow.

Let me therefore now renew my exhortation to you, to sell all in this respect, to sit loose to the world, to renounce and resign it, to accept of Christ Jesus as your all in all. In this consists your loosing from the world. And endeavour through the whole of your life to sit loose to it, which, in consequence of that selling, lies in these three things to which I exhort you also.

1. Look on whatsoever you have as no more your own but the Lord's, which he may dispose of as seems good in his eyes. This follows on your having renounced and resigned them. *You are not your own, but bought with a price.* Hence the children of God are said to look on themselves as pilgrims and strangers in the world. Their language is, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." *If you take me, says Christ, let these go their way.* If you will have Christ to be yours, let all you have be his, and look on it as such.

2. Place so little dependence upon what you have, as that you may be able to stand without them, when they are called from you.

"This I say, Brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none. And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." If you take the treasure in heaven instead of these things, it follows of course, that as he that sells his land, especially for more than its worth, can live without it on its price; so in the want of these things, *you will rejoice in the Lord, and will joy in the God of your salvation.* Why should a man's heart sink, when the thing sold is delivered, while he hath more than the worth instead of it. O it is a sad mark when a man falls, while any thing of the world is removed, as a house when its pillars are overturned.

3. Be ready always to part with them when God calls for them. If they be not yours, you are but stewards of that which is the Lord's, and why should he be refused what of his own he calls for? And what is that to you, or to any of us, whom he employs to receive it, or to whom he obliges you to give it up. You are in his debt for the use you have had of his so long. For God might have obliged you to deliver up all in the moment of sale. In the moment that you renounced the world and took Christ, he might have stripped you naked of all earthly enjoyments, and by virtue of your own voluntary resignation. Again, there is no term for delivery condescended upon, but it is to be made on demand. Should we not rather wonder then, that God is so long in calling for his own, and that he leaves us the use of it so long, especially considering we so much abuse it. Surely this is not the manner of men. Therefore,

When God calls for any thing we have, we should part with it freely, and not grudgingly. O it is a sad matter that God must wring his own out of our hands; and that we should spoil the gift with the surly way of giving it. If the heart had not too fast a hold of it, we would part with it more freely, *as a matter of bounty, and not of covetousness.* We should also do it thankfully, we should not only barely submit, but submit thankfully, saying, *good is the will of the Lord.* There is matter of thankfulness, that we have had it so long in loan, and that ordinarily God takes not all his own way at once; but while life is left he leaves the best, *For the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment.* And if life itself be called for, we must even *be ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.* We should also be ready to acknowledge that we are not losers at his hand.—"We should with Paul, count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for whom we suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that we may win Christ."

In allusion to David's excessive sorrow for the death of Absalom, we may remark, that often the manner in which we part with what we have, says, we think that God is in the wrong to us.

Perhaps it may be objected that these things might do well enough in the parting with the world for the cause of Christ? but that is not our case, and so these things do not concern us. Answer. It may however come to be your case, and therefore you ought to sit loose to the world in view of it. It is true also that many go to heaven, that never suffer by persecutors for religion, but none go there but through tribulation. Do you think that God never hath people on their trials, whether they love Christ, or the world best, but when enemies are fining, plundering, or hanging them, if you do, you are mistaken. See the text. Your daily crosses are trials of this nature; and let me say it, sometimes these prove a greater trial than the other.—Some have given what they had to enemies with better will, than to God taking it away immediately by his own hand. Again, the cause is still the same, for in private trials, our love to Christ and the world are still in competition, and whatever way God calls for it, we must part with it, for his sake.

Motives To press this duty of sitting loose to the world.

1. Consider the vanity of the world. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This world is a heap of vanities. Men are carried away snatching at shadows.—All things in the world are so empty and uncertain, that no dependence can be placed upon them. There is an insufficiency, and an emptiness in all earthly things. They are greater in expectation, than in enjoyment.—A man shall as soon fill his hand with the wind, as his heart with the world, Prov. xxiii. 5. These things are also uncertain. There is nothing constant here but inconstancy. The world is a wheel, in which that spoke that was now upmost, is next the lowest. Nothing is secure, our relations may be lost by death; and sometimes there is less satisfaction in the having of them, than it were so. How quickly do worldly goods go away, Matth. vi. 19. Pleasure is attended with pain and is short lived. The most untainted reputation may die with the bite of a malicious tongue. Our life itself hangs on a thousand uncertainties.

2. You must part with all you have sooner or later. Death approaches, that will permit us to carry nothing away but a coffin and shroud. Let men hold as fast as they will they must part. It is wisdom then to sit loose to that which we cannot keep, especially when we are not sure of retaining them one moment. It is bad preparation for death to be fixed to them.

3. Consider that sitting loose to them, is necessary preparation for suffering. We may be called to suffer. God hath told us,

"that in the world we shall have tribulation," and he will have all that come to him to lay their account with it. Besides, it is very probable the things that concern us make haste. Things have a very bad aspect at this time. Our enemies are lifting up their heads. But above all that which may strike a damp into our hearts, is the sin of the land ripening for the sickle of vengeance. The gospel is despised; atheism, profanity, and irreligion, abound more and more. All flesh hath corrupted their ways. As for our great people generally they have burst the yoke.—Ministers and professors have had long ease and they have all gathered much mud. The gospel does generally so little good, that I believe there are not a few who could be content to welcome the cross, so as the gospel might have more influence on the hearts of themselves and their people. But O how will ye stand it, if not loose to the world. A carnal heavy heart, is a heavy weight on all good motions of the soul. If a storm blow, it will blow out the fire of some, and blow up the fire of others.

4. Consider that if ever you have engaged to Christ, then you give up the world in profession, when you were baptized, and you that sat down at the Lord's table you have solemnly renounced and resigned it.

Lastly, Consider that persons have the most unsure hold of that to which their hearts are most attached.—Jonah *was exceeding glad for the gourd.* You cannot take a surer way to make yourselves quit of any enjoyment, than to let it run away with your heart. They that sit loosest to the world have the surest hold.—"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

Doctrine IV.—A heart loosed from the world, so as to be ready to part with whatsoever we have at God's call, is necessary to evidence our sincerity. This was the very thing by which our Saviour discovered the hypocrisy of the man in the text.

Reason 4. Because the soul cannot reasonably lay hold on Christ, but it must needs let the world go. The laying hold on Christ, necessarily infers our loosing our hold of the world, Luke xiv. 26. We may as soon grasp heaven and earth at once, as fix on Christ and not loose from the world.

2. Because it is impossible, that the love of God and the world can be both predominant in the heart. One of them must prevail above the other. If it be the love of God, then it will command the love of the world to give place, Heb. xi. 25, 26. If it be the love of the world, then it leaves no love to God, because no predominant

love. "For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This proves the man a hypocrite. For whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.

3. Because otherwise our obedience is not universal, there is some one thing lacking, that will bring shame on us at last, Psal. cxix. 6. Such cannot follow the Lord wheresoever he goes, but have their exceptions at his commandments, which discover their hypocrisy.

4. Because otherwise there is no universal resignation to the will of God, which is necessary to prove the sincerity of the heart, Acts ix. 6. If this be wanting there is nothing done; there is no giving to the Lord what he chiefly seeks, namely that we may be all his. A certain evidence, the work of grace was never carried through else we would have been a people of *willingnesses*. Psalm cx. 3.

Use 1. *Of Information.* This writes death.

1. To all covetous wretches whose hearts are glued to the world, so as they cannot part with it at God's call, as in the text. That idol mammon hath many adorers, who set their affections on things on the earth; whose excessive love of the world overturns all their pretences to the love of God. These are they whom God abhorreth, and whom he excludeth from heaven, 1 Cor. vi. 10. and whose end shall be destruction.

2. To those who can part with many things at God's call, yet have some one thing that the heart is fixed to, in which their will can never comply with the will of God to part with it, such was Ahithophel's reputation. God will have *all* or *nothing*. It is all one, whether the persons have many idols, or only one: if there be any thing he cannot part with for God, he is, and will be miserable.

3. To those who though they cannot part with what they have for God, they can part with at the devil's call, and give it out on their lusts to satisfy them.—How liberally will men bestow on their lusts, who look on all as lost that is given out for God and his service, like Nabal, 1. Sam. xxv. 36. and those described by the apostle James, chap. iv. 3, 4.

5. To those who instead of parting with what they have, will part with God and a good conscience to gain something more of the world. Common honesty is failed with many, especially of the poorer sort, who giving themselves up to picking and stealing to the dishonour of God, and disgrace of the society to which they belong. Alas it is sad, that that should be all the effect of God's heavy hand on families. These things are kept hid from the eyes of men, but there is a God that sees and will bring such persons to a dreadful account, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Zech. v. 3, 4.

Use 2. *Of Exhortation.* Evidence your sincerity by being ready

to part with what you have at God's call. I told you before when God calls you to part with what you have. Now when any of these is your case God hath you on your trials. Accordingly I exhort you,

1. That whenever it is so, that you must either sin or suffer loss. Choose always the last. The greatest loss in the world is to be chosen rather than the least sin. A man should rather lose his life than tell a lie. Consider there is more evil in the least sin, than in the greatest suffering or loss. Sin is a sinful evil, the other but a penal evil. There is some good in the evil of punishment, the good of justice, there is none in sin. Losses come from the Lord, sin only from the devil. Sure that which comes from the devil, must be worse than what comes from God. Sin is the only object of God's hatred: if all other evils in the world should centre in a man, God could love him for all that; but if all other goods should meet in him, God would hate him for sin. There is more evil in sin, than there is goodness in all the angels of heaven; therefore when it entered it spoiled all their goodness, and made them devils, which could not have been, if the goodness in them had been greater than the evil of sin.

Again, If you intend to follow the footsteps of the flock you must take this way. As for the fearful, that fear suffering more than sin, their doom is, "to have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Daniel would rather be cast into the den of lions than sin. The primitive Christians chose loss and poverty, yea, prisons and death rather than sin, Heb. xi. 25, 26, 35. It is better to be God's prisoner, than the devil's freeman. Nay, they chose hell rather than sin. They whose experience hath given them a commentary on 2 Cor. vii. 11. clearing, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, revenge, will own it. It was a saying of Chrysostom, I thus think, and I will constantly declare, that it is more bitter to sin against Christ, than to suffer the torments of hell.

Ettrick, September, 1710.

[Same Subject Continued.]

AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

SERMON XXXV.

MARK x. 21. (Second Clause.)
And give to the poor.

FROM these words taken in their strict connection with the preceding and following clauses of the verse, I would exhort you to make conscience of giving to the poor. This is a duty at all times, and the present is in a peculiar manner a hard time. Many are reduced to great want, and it is certainly God's call to us, in a special manner, now to put on bowels of mercy for that effect. Here I shall show,

First, How or in what manner God calls us to give to the poor, and,

Secondly, Bring forward motives to enforce this duty. I am then,

I. To show how or in what manner God calls us to give to the poor. We are to do it,

1. Under a sense of the command of God. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." God asks it of us by the mouth of needy creatures, and it should be given as to him, who in that way calls for it. This is necessary to make it a Christian giving.

2. For his sake. Love to the Lord should be the source of it, and his glory the end of it. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the fruits of all thine increase." He gave us what we have, and it should be laid out for his sake. Hear our Lord's own words, and from them learn how highly he values this duty. "Whosoever, says he, shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Again, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But it may be objected, that there are but few to whom we can give it as saints. Answer, It is a sad truth, most of the poor of the world are poor every way. But you see the rule in this case. It

therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, them who are of the household of faith." Though poor are not God's saints, they are God's creatures; not true Christians, yet men of the same blood with ourselves, and so our neighbours, *whom we are to love as ourselves.* See Gen. ix. 6.

3. Humbly without any opinion of merit or valuing ourselves upon our charity. "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." It is but God's own we return him, why should we think much of it. They that think to buy heaven with their works of charity, will find that they have sold it by their presumption.

4. Compassionately and tenderly. Hence it is called *shewing mercy*, because it should flow from a charitable and compassionate mind, pitying those that are in distress. The injunction is, "Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." And thus it will be given without shameing the poor. Thus Boaz caused, "let some handfuls fall on purpose for Ruth, and leave them that she may glean them, and said, reproach her not."

5. Seasonably, when there is most need. Unnecessary delays must be carefully avoided. The command is, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." Say not to thy neighbour, "Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast by thee." A gift in season is a double gift. And much of God's goodness is sometimes seen in that.

6. Cheerfully, with real good will. *The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.* What is given with a grudge, is much lost before the Lord. Why should we that are but stewards of our Lord's goods, grudge to give out at his command.

But to this it may be objected that the poor are often unthankful. Answer, That is their sin, but let it not be your temptation. You are to give as unto the Lord, and look for your reward at his hand, not at the hands of those to whom it is given. "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." We are then to seek God's honour, not ourselves in the matter.

7. Liberally, according to your ability; making it a matter of bounty. We must give *as God hath prospered us.* We cannot determine what, and how much is to be given particularly, but that must be determined by every person considering his own ability,

and the need of the object. "Those to whom God hath given much, of them much is required." But though a man have not a farthing to give, he ought to give in affection, and whatever way it is in his power to help the poor he is bound to do it. Our own straits do not altogether excuse us, though they warrant us to give the less, as the widow's mite was fully enough for her. Men are even bound to labour and work for that very end, *that they may have to give to the poor*, Ephes. iv. 28. 2 Cor. viii. 1—4. I shall now,

II. Bring forward some motives to enforce this duty.

1. We are not absolute masters, but stewards of what we have in the world. The world is God's household. To some he hath given the stewardship, others are to be fed by them, Luke xvi. 10, 12. we must give an account to him of our stewardship, even to him who could have put us in their case, and them in ours. The due consideration of this, would make us more easily part with a portion of what we have to the poor.

2. It is a duty bound upon us with ties both divine and natural. The law of God, in the scriptures, requires it, 2 Cor. 8th and 9th chapters. Nature itself binds it on us, teaching us to do to others, what we would others should do to us, if we were in their case. It is not only charity, but humanity itself that commands us to supply the necessities of the poor. And therefore unless we divest ourselves of humanity we must attend to this duty.

3. Consider the evil of shutting up our bowels from the poor. It is a sin of a deep dye. It is horrid ingratitude to God. He hath given unto us so much, and yet we will not part with a portion of it back again to himself when he calls for it. It is Christ himself that asks alms of us by the mouth of the poor, Matth. xxv. 40, 45. Now, if Jesus Christ came to us personally, what a dreadful thing would it be to deny him.

It is perfidiousness to God, and unfaithfulness in the charge which he hath committed to us. It is as if a steward should turn all to his own use, which the master hath entrusted to him for the maintenance of the family. It is even a kind of theft, and that of the worst sort, robbing the poor of what God has made their due. This God will punish, though the laws of men do not.

It is a decree of murder, 1 John iii. 15, 17. For as the fire may be put out by withholding fuel, as well as by pouring water upon it, so a man's life may be taken away by denying to him the supports of life, as well as by doing violence to him.

4. Consider the evil that follows it. It is a disposition of soul most disadvantageous, attended with a train of miserable consequences. It brings a moth into what a man hath, and is the high-

way to poverty and want. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." For while men thus hold together, God in his anger scattereth what they have. It is also a very black mark against the soul in religion. It is inconsistent with the true love of God. "For whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him." Yea, it declares a person to be void of all religion, James i. 27. It is followed with most dreadful threatenings of the Lord's shewing no mercy to such. "They shall have judgment without mercy, that have shewed no mercy. Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

5. Consider the excellency of a charitable frame of spirit, ever ready to communicate to the poor. It is a blessed thing even by our Lord's own verdict, and he commends it as a thing more to be desired than received. *It is more blessed*, said he, *to give than to receive.* In this duty we do in a special manner put on the image and likeness of God, Luke vi. 35, 36. Our Lord Jesus Christ when he was in the world, though he became poor, yet by his own example he recommended the duty of giving to the poor. It is selected from among other works, and applauded in the day of judgment, Matth. xxv.

6. Consider the advantages which attend it. God has bound many signal advantages to it by promise. It is the very way to secure a through-bearing. Give in this way what you have at God's call, and you shall be provided for. "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse." It is the best way to secure our means that are liable to so many accidents, Eccl. xi. 1—3. Laying out for God is better security than laying up what God calls for, for thus it is put in a sure hand, who will be sure to pay it again, Prov. xix. 17. It is the best way to be rich, as that way is pointed out by the Lord. If we thus honour God with our substance, *our barns shall be filled with plenty, and our presses burst out with new wine.* Solomon observes the accomplishment of this, *for there is that scattereth*, says he, *and yet increaseth;* and every age hath produced instances of this truth. You may see a cluster of benefits annexed to this duty, Psalm xl. 1—5.

Lastly, To sum up all, God has promised mercy to those that are thus rightly qualified. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Therefore our Lord tells us how to improve the goods of this world for eternal life. "Make to yourselves, says he, friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may re-

ceive you into everlasting habitations."—See also 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. I shall shut up this by recommending to your serious reading and meditation, two passages of holy writ, Deut. xv. 7—11. Observe upon verse 7th, That the poor as well as the rich are to be treated as brethren; and a hand shut to the poor, is an evidence of a hard heart. Observe upon verse 8th, We should give bountifully. Verse 9th, It is a dreadful thing to have a poor person justly table a complaint before the Lord against us. Verse 10th, We must not give with a grudge, and what is given in that way, will bring a blessing on what is behind. Verse 11th, The world shall never see the day in which men shall be able to serve God without cost and expences. See also, 2 Cor. 8th and 9th chapters.

I would now, in strict connection with the doctrine of the text, exhort you to give evidence of your sincerity by parting with, and restoring whatever ill-gotten goods any of you have. This reacheth to thieves, to oppressors, to cheaters, to unjust dealers of every description, and all that possess any thing of their neighbours' got unjustly. Restoration ought to be made of the thing itself taken away if possible, and if not, of the value of it. And restoration is to be made to the true owner if he can be found, Neh. v. 11. his heirs, or to whomsoever his goods belong, and failing these, to God, bestowing it to be employed to pious uses, or towards the poor, Numb. v. 7, 8. Luke xix. 8. If the person be not able, I judge in that case confession should be made, if a great evil do not follow, and the party engaged to restore if ever he be able, and in the mean time he be ready to do whatsoever he can towards the compensation, as by service, Exod. xxii. 3.

But the retaining of ill-gotten goods is a continued theft, oppression, or cheat, and it is inconsistent with sincere repentance knowingly and willingly to keep still that which ever is the matter of our guilt, and the accursed thing among our stuff. To repent and yet still to enjoy the sin willingly is a contradiction. That man repents not of the wrong he has done to others, who, though he can, yet will not mend it, and is not disposed to give every one their own.

Lastly, I exhort you to give evidence of your sincerity, by parting willingly with what providence will not allow you to keep, but pulls out of your hands. Whatever satisfaction the Lord denies you in worldly things, whatever losses you meet with, know this, God hath you on your trials, and the mere parting with them will not evidence your sincerity, for that you must do, whether you will or not: But you must do it freely.

Submissively, without murmuring against the Lord either in your

hearts or words. So Aaron parted with his sons, *He held his peace.* Lament. iii. 27, 28. God must have his own at his call, and we should not entertain a wrong thought of him for it.

We must do it contentedly and thankfully. If the Lord will take away any thing, we should be content to want it. Saying with David, "Behold here are we, let him do to us as seemeth good unto him: and let us learn in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content;" and to love him as well under the want, as the enjoyment of it.

Consider you are put to the trial. In that case the devil alleged that Job was a hypocrite; the trying point which he chose was losses and crosses in the world, Job i. 9—11. But Job proved himself sincere in that way. They that put in for the crown, must pass their trials for it under the cross. But of this afterwards.

Ettrick, September, 1710.

[Same Subject Continued.]

AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

SERMON XXXVI.

MARK x. 21. (Second Clause.)

And thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

DOCTRINE I.

A VIEW of the treasure in heaven is the best expedient to sink the value of the world in the hearts of men. This is the method our Lord takes with this man. This is the argument by which he tries to separate his heart from the world.

Reason 1. Because the heart will always hold to the world, till it see something better to which it may cleave. The heart is an empty hungry thing that must have something to feed upon. It is needless to desire it to part with husks, unless you shew it bread enough which it may have, then it will throw away the husks with goodwill. Till God effectually overbid the world, it will always keep the man's heart.

2. Because the treasures in heaven infinitely transcend the world, and all that is in it; so that when they are both seen together, the world must, as the stars, disappear before the rising sun. A man

may highly value a cottage in a wilderness, but place it in a city amidst splendid buildings, and he would be ashamed of it. Therefore Satan hinders men to look upward. The world is a contemptible heap of dust, to a man who views it from among the stars, Phil. iii. 20, 21.

Not to insist, but make short work, I shall come to the application of this point. And the best use which I can make of it is to try this method with your hearts, to loose them from the world and make them heavenly. I might use many motives to urge you to bid an eternal farewell to the world, that you might take up your rest in God. I might open the gates of the bottomless pit, that the smoke thereof might blind your eyes, and the flames flash in your faces, to stop you in the pursuit of these miserable vanities. I might tell you,

1. That this miserable world is the devil's bait, with which he draws men in shoals down the stream, into the sea of God's wrath, Matth. iv. 9. And which is most sad, he draws many with baits made of that, who yet never taste the bait. How many have been eternally ruined, pursuing some worldly thing which they could never reach; but lost both their souls and their pains; yea and before they could get at hell, they have got a hell within them of tormenting passions, because God would not bow to their will, and give them what they would have had. I might also tell you,

2. The sweet of the world's cup will soon be exhausted, but you will never get to the bottom of the dregs of it, Luke xvi. 25. There is a *now* thou art tormented, that will never be over. There will be a long eternity to pay the expense of this foul feast, which the heart is making on the things of the world.

3. The fire of God's wrath will loose those firm holds of the world, that the fire of God's word cannot.—The things of the world run so fast away with the hearts of men, that they cannot hear God's voice calling them to return. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life hang so about men now, that they cannot get looked up to behold the beauty of Christ. But the fire of hell will burn them off, and leave them to lie down naked in the flames. Dives's table is drawn now. The rich man, Luke xii. has no more to do with his barns. When Judas went to *his own place*, he left the thirty pieces behind him.

4. The world and all you have in it, will be in flames ere long, and you will perish in the flames, if you escape not now in time. All these things are "reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Be not then so fond of that which will make an ill end. Haste and escape for your life, for

there is a shower of fire abiding the world and all that take it for their portion.

But I would rather open heaven's door to you, to give you a view of the treasure there, according to our Lord's method in the text, in which he teaches other two things, namely,

Doctrine 2nd. Whosoever will sell whatsoever they have in the world for Christ, they shall suffer no loss, they shall have treasure in heaven.

Doctrine 3d. But they that will needs keep their hold of the world, may bid an eternal farewell to the treasure in heaven, for they have neither lot nor portion in it. These are forcible motives indeed! O that they might take with us. For the first of these. I have been telling you of a market to be held in your hearts, where you should sell to God whatsoever you have. I come this day in his name to make an offer for whatsoever you have, that the blessed bargain may be closed.—And I intreat you all to take it to you. Let not poor persons think themselves unconcerned, because they have nothing: if it were as far from your hearts as from your hands, you would be happy people. Let none think themselves unconcerned here as if this were not their temptation. I know there are some ready to say, with a whole heart, they care not for the world and need not the exhortation to part with it. I have no hope of prevailing with these people while of that mind.

1. I believe all in the world who are exercised unto godliness, will allow you to stand alone, and tell you to reign as kings without them. For in themselves they feel a body of death that cares so much for the world, that they have much to do to keep it down, and that they find no easy work with their various worldly lusts.

2. Let me ask you, how got you that heart of yours loosed from the world? I am sure it would abide a pull of the hand of Omnipotence ere it was done: have you felt this? "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" But alas the victory of many over the world, comes to them in a morning dream, and is itself but a dream.

3. How do you get free of the world's grasp? If this costs you hard struggling, you will not think you care not for it. If it costs you none, I will tell you the mystery of your great ease that way. "The strong man armed, still keeps the house with you."

4. What means the bleating of the sheep; and your other symptoms of love to the world. There is a blind generation that cannot see their own defilement, unless they be completely sunk in gross

actions. They do not, they cannot view the secret outgoings of the heart after idols. What means the *Buts* in your desires of the world—but as much as to keep your credit—but as much as will procure an honest through-bearing and the like. Whether does your heart slip most easily away to the thoughts of God, or the world; and which of them is it easiest to keep at? Nay, does not the world many times justle out your duty to God, or at least indispose you for it? Whether looks religion or the world likest your by-hand work. Nay, nay, lay your hands on your mouths, and cry unclean, unclean. To you is this word of salvation sent, that you may make the blessed exchange. Sell all to the Lord, and you shall be happy for ever. God is asking of you whatsoever you have, that you will just now part with it to him in affection, this moment take your heart from the creature to himself, and quit it freely in affection when he calls for it.

More particularly, that you will thus quit to him whatever you have in hand of the world, be it little or much, your goods and effects, relations, pleasures, comforts, and life itself. Lay all at his feet. Also, whatever you have in heart, the lust of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, &c. Call in your desires now that are pursuing the world, and give them to Christ.—Leave the heart pursuit of created things. *And you shall have treasure in heaven.* We are allowed to offer you this in his name. We are ambassadors for Christ, and have warrant to transact this bargain with you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will honestly consent to it, and this moment give up with all, we declare the treasure in heaven shall be yours. And to make this offer take with you, I shall now proceed to lead your attention,

In the first place, To the nature of this treasure.—And then shall unfold to your view, its special and excellent properties. Let us then,

I. Consider the nature of this treasure in heaven.

1. It is a treasure in respect of variety and plenty. It is not one thing but many, that makes up a treasure. You are desired to part with many things, but God offers you more instead of them. What a poor scanty thing is this world. All that is in it is soon told. We have the inventory of it drawn to our hand, and it consists but of three things. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." But this treasure consists of all things. "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things." Neither heart nor eye can ever reach the bottom of it.—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, to conceive the things which God hath laid up for

them that love him." The apostle's arithmetic fails him to count this treasure, I will only tell you of four things which you will get in it.

1. The whole collection of the graces of the Spirit, each of them more precious than gold. These make a person all glorious within and without also; whereas the world's treasure goes but the half of the way, yea the least of the worst half too. "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." If ever your eyes be opened you would give ten thousand worlds for the least of these graces, however little valued now. Now whenever the soul goes to Christ from the world, Christ just stamps his image on that soul. When they believe *they are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.*

2. The whole glorious collection of the privileges of the saints, peace, pardon, a right to heaven purchased by the blood of Christ. All is in the treasure. God will heap privileges upon you. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Will you leave this cottage of the world, forget your father's house, and you shall be brought into the family above, and have a right to all the privileges of the members of the family.

3. The eternal weight of glory above. *Even the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Put the world in a balance with it. O how little is it. All the angels in heaven through eternity shall never be able to count the weight of it.

Lastly, The whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. The Father shall be your Father, Christ yours, the Spirit yours. O the infinite fulness of God, which no creature is able to comprehend, in whom the soul shall find a treasure casting up something new through all eternity.

2. It is a treasure in respect of preciousness. We do not make treasures but of things of worth. O! are not the graces of the Spirit, the privileges of the saints, the weight of glory and the enjoyment of God precious indeed. What is the world but a heap of loss and dung, according to Paul's account of it. Solomon reckons up all that is in the world, and sets down the title in two great cyphers, Eccles. i. 2. Vanity in themselves. Vexation in the getting, keeping, using and losing of them. And is this the price of your labour, sweat and cares? Are we so mad on loss; so unsatisfied and restless in pursuit of dung; so eager on vanity and so fond of vexation. O bewitched mortals, once look above, behold, a treasure well worth your pains, a treasure of precious things.

There is no refuse in this treasure, all in it is precious. The pleasures there are perfectly pure, free of all dregs, the riches there are durable; the glory there eternal, the very streets of the city are paved with pure gold. O then "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

This treasure was purchased with the precious blood of precious Christ, 1 Pet. i. 19. Silver and gold could never have bought it. O how precious must that be, that cost the blood of the Son of God, not a few drops, but a treasure of blood. He was wise, and would not pay more for it than was needful. He was just, and a Father, and would not put his son to needless expence, especially of blood.

This treasure is wrapt up in precious promises. In the holy scriptures *are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.* What is it that makes them precious, but the precious treasures that are in them, Matt. xiii. 44, 46. O if you had the eye of faith to see into the promises, you would see them big with glory, you would see their happiness in words and syllables, eternity couched in a sentence, an eternal weight of glory wrapt in a word.

3. It is a treasure in respect of closeness. Treasures are not laid open to every one's view. This treasure is a hidden treasure, Matt. xxiii. 44. It is hid to the most of the world, they never hear of it. It is hid to the unrenewed man, he cannot see it, no not when even the light of the gospel shines to make it visible. It is in a great measure hid to believers. *For it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* And even in glory they will not see to the very end of it. But for the world its treasures are common to the worst, who often have the largest share of them. And no doubt you have a hundred times seen completely through them, that there is no satisfaction to be had in them.

Now this treasure is the Lord's offer to you, will you accept of it or not? Have you any heart for it? Say Amen to the bargain then, and go your ways home, and make a solemn resignation of all you have in heart or hand to the Lord, and take this for all, and it is yours. I am now,

II. To unfold to your view the special and excellent properties of this treasure.

1. It is a real treasure. Other treasures have but the name, not the thing of a treasure. Consider the treasure in heaven consists of the most certain realities. It is a substantial treasure. Earthly treasures are not so. *Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not.* But the heavenly treasure is filled with substance. Hebrew. "That I may cause those which love me to inherit substance; and I will

fill their treasures." The expression is massy. Earthly treasures are not what they seem to be to their possessors. They are but gilded vanities that deceive the eyes. They make men but full and rich in a dream; "as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth, but he awaketh, and his soul is empty." The reputation which they have in the world they owe to men's imagination, not to themselves.

But the treasures of heaven are not only what they seem, but more than they appear to the possessors of them. They are so as spoken of in the gospel, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Heaven will be a far greater surprize to the saints, than Solomon's glory was to the queen of Sheba. They are so as they appear in the glass of ordinances. The saints would not exchange for ten thousand worlds what they thus behold, how much more when face to face, Psal. iv. 6, 7. They seem great, but are greater.

Again, Earthly treasures are not in respect of stability. We may say of the treasures as of the man of the world. After all his shew "yet he passeth away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." They are bound to the possessors.—They are but sojourners with, not married to them, can leave them at any time. We may as easily lay up a treasure of water in a sieve, or treasure up moments of time which are not, ere they be numbered, as a real treasure of the world. *For the world passeth away and the lusts thereof*, Haggai i. 6. But the treasures in heaven are fixed and stable, through eternity; we may say they are. Eternal wrath is, and will be always, the wrath to come. So likewise are the treasures in heaven. This treasure is, that is, it is married to the man that once takes it by the hand. They will always be led to them. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Earthly treasures are not comparitively. They have no reality in comparison of treasure in heaven. *I am* is the name of the treasure in heaven, exclusive of all other, Exod. iii. 14. All the treasures on earth have more of privation, than either matter or form. There is infinitely more of nothingness, and not-being than being in them. What they are may soon be told, but what they are not can never, till we search out the Almighty to perfection. Heap together all the gold of the universe, the most exquisite pleasures, highest honours, comfortable relations, and all that ever were, or shall be in the world; add to these all the angels in heaven, united to you as one flesh, the little substance that is in all would be overwhelmed with a heap of wants, as a filing of gold under a mountain.

Such are the treasures of heaven, that all else dwindles into nothing besides them, as a taper before the sun in his meridian splendour.

2. The treasure in heaven, is a treasure of things truly precious and excellent. Earthly treasures are not so. The men of the world acknowledge this, that a treasure is only of precious substantial things. *We shall find*, say they, *all precious substance*. But they miss their mark; the godly only obtain it. What is the world and all that is in it, but *loss and dung, vanity and vexation*. It is but a scheme or draught of a thing.—Greek, 1 Cor. vii. 31. and that a passing scheme. Heaven only is the house in which we can dwell. The Spirit of God calls all Agrippa and Bernice's pomp but a fancy, Greek, Acts xxv. 23. And is a heap of loss, emptiness, and fancies, the treasure with which you are so much bewitched. The best name they get is good things; but mark, they are only the wicked's good things, Luke xvi. 25. Well may they call them their goods, for there is nothing good in them, about them, or waiting on them, but these things. *Thy good things*, said Abraham to the rich man, I indeed got good things, but not my good things, they were my comforts, not my treasure.

But the treasure in heaven is a treasure of precious things indeed. Jesus saith, "I will cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures." It is a *weight of glory*. This world's glory is as light as a feather, soon blown away; but this is massy and weighty. If you seek for riches in it, *there are durable riches and righteousness*. For pleasures, then *at God's right hand are pleasures for ever more*. If you seek for gold, you will find it among your feet, were you at it; "For the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass." One jewel in that treasure is of more worth than all of the world, that ever hands could gather together; that ever hearts did, nay, or can conceive. "For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared with it.

3. It is a treasure for the soul. Other treasures are but for the body, the worst part of the man. Treasuring them up is but laying clay to clay. But treasure in heaven is suitable to the nature of the soul. The soul is a spirit, and this treasure is spiritual containing "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."—The soul cannot feed on the things of the world, more than the body can do on ashes. He was a fool that thought his soul could take ease in the treasure, *laid up in his barns*, Luke xii. 19. Debase not the high born soul, to match with things of the world. It is an unsuitable match in which there will be no comfort.—The soul is immortal, and the treasure in heaven is durable. "Riches and honour

are with me, saith Jesus; yea, durable riches and righteousness." The world will not go a step with you beyond this present life, but the treasure in heaven will last for ever; as long as the soul lasts it will not waste; for it is *an eternal weight of glory*. The soul may go to it and take out of it eternally, it will never grow less.

Again, This treasure is suited not only to the nature, but also to the necessities of the soul, as meat is to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and rest to the weary.—The soul hath many dismal wants, which all the world cannot supply, but the treasure in heaven can. If your bodies be naked, you can procure cloth to cover them, but you cannot purchase a righteousness to cover the naked soul. But here is *white raiment to clothe it*. The fruits of the earth can feed your bodies, but your starving souls cannot be supported that way. But here is heavenly food for them. *My flesh*, saith Jesus, *is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*. Do you want a price for your redemption. Riches profit not in the day of death, and the fruit of the body cannot atone for the sin of the soul. But here is laid up the precious blood of Christ. Do you want a pardon? Here is a treasure of mercy. For your comfort, here are full breasts of consolation. Yea, here is complete happiness, and here are all things suited to the soul.

It is a satisfying treasure. *I have all*, says the apostle, *and abound*. All this world cannot satisfy a soul. The world can never fill the heart, but God can. You may as soon grasp your arms full of dreams, and hug your own shadow, as draw satisfaction out of the dry breasts of the world. Esau said to Jacob, *I have enough*, and Jacob said to him, *Because God hath dealt graciously with me, I have enough*. O! what a vast difference between these two enoughs. Nay, the whole world is a bed shorter than the soul can stretch itself upon. Had we Absalom's beauty, Samson's strength, Solomon's riches and wisdom, nay Adam's paradise with the forbidden tree, which still told him his happiness was not there, they would still leave our souls dissatisfied and longing for more, as pinched with want. But,

The treasures in heaven are satisfying in themselves. Even the treasures of grace here are so, where the light of assurance shines to let a man see how rich he is.—He values what he hath in hand and in hope more than ten thousand worlds. *A good man shall be satisfied from himself*. From himself as united to God, in opposition to the heart that backslides from God. They have a heaven within themselves. "For they know in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

The treasures of glory are infinitely satisfactory. *I shall be*

satisfied, says David, *when I awake with thy likeness*. The soul shall be made happy with the same happiness with which God himself is happy, which is the enjoyment of himself. Glorious with the same glory with which he is glorious. Satisfied from the same fountain from which he himself is satisfied, 2 Thess. ii. 14. compared with Rev. iii. 21.

As these treasures are satisfying in themselves, so they make worldly comforts satisfying. He that hath most of heaven, enjoys most of the earth, though others may possess more than he. "A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." These treasures make the saint's dish of green herbs go farther than the stalled ox of others, and put more pleasure in their cup. This treasure produces in the saints mean thoughts of the things of the world, Phil. iii. 8. It is because men have such high thoughts of these things, that they cannot get enough of them. But people soon get enough of what they do not care much for. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lusts, like the grave, never have enough.

They stamp a value upon the little which the saints have of worldly things, these are additions to the treasure. "All these things, saith Jesus, shall be added unto you; for our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things." That may be thankfully taken for an addition, which for the main could never satisfy. Hence the reason of the difference between the godly and the wicked in these things. This treasure makes up all the wants, and the man hath always what he needs that hath it. Who are they in the world that have most to spare, not the rich man that abounds with worldly goods, for he never hath more than he needs, nay, never so much. But the godly man, take from him all you can, he hath always enough behind.

5th and last place. The treasures are safe and sure, men may promise on the head of them for ever. They are safe and sure in themselves. Though none should offer violence to them, they will rust and corrupt of themselves. There is nothing on the earth but what has a principle of corruption in itself, and carries the seeds of death about it in its bosom. The aged world tends to a dissolution. Men are now of lower stature, less bones and strength than their forefathers, and of shorter lives. So is the strength of nature's womb decayed, that it seems she is waxing old, and weary of conceiving, Psalm cii. 25, 26. So that treasures on earth are like summer fruit, that have a luscious sweetness, but they will not keep.

But the treasures in heaven are sure in themselves. Though gold will, grace will not rust. Though all the beauty in the world fades,

as the leaves in harvest, yet the fields of glory are ever green. It is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. It is a crown of glory, that fadeth not away." Though this world wax old, the treasures in heaven do not, Luke xii. 33. There is no principle of corruption in them. These riches never fail, they are durable; the weight of glory never grows less, it is eternal.

These treasures are not only safe and sure in themselves, but are so also to the owners. Though this world were so in itself, yet it is not so to us. Its riches are uncertain. But of heavenly treasures we can never be deprived. All earthly treasures may be taken from us. We may live and see ourselves stripped naked of all we have. A Cynic called riches the vomit of fortune; and if so, like the dog she often returns and takes it again. Job saw himself both rich and poor to a proverb in his day. They are liable to an insensible consumption, as by a moth, Matth. vi. 19. Prov. xxiii. 5. When men suffer their hearts to fly out at their eyes, like a ravenous bird upon them, they oft make themselves wings and fly away.

But the heavenly treasures cannot be taken from us, Luke x. 42. God doth but lend us the world, but makes an irrevocable gift of the treasure in heaven, Rom. xi. 29. The devil took away by permission Job's worldly comforts and left him nothing, Job ii. 7, 8. but he could not touch his treasure of grace, verse 9th.—Nor would he himself give it away, Job xxvii. 5. Nor his treasure of glory, chap. xix. 35—27. The waters of affliction may wash off the dust, but your land is still safe.

We ourselves will be taken from the treasures on earth. Death will part them and us. All we have here, can only do as servants in an inn, who, while we are there, wait on us, but go not away with us, but remain to serve those that come after us. We must leave what we have, and always the more there is of it, the parting is the more heavy. A man may live more conveniently, but cannot die so easily in a palace as in a cottage. And when we leave them, we know not assuredly to whom they are to be left, whether to a wise man or a fool.

But though death takes the carnal man from, it carries the saint to, his treasure. The man whose treasure is in heaven, is his own heir. Remarkable is that word, Matth. vi. 10. *Lay up for yourselves.* You may lay up on earth, but none can answer that question. Who shall reap the fruit of thy sweet care and toil? God made the Assyrian heir to the Philistines, Micah i. 15. But it is sure that the treasure in heaven is laid up for ourselves. *He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*, with his treasure, even as in the world both the lusts and the lusters perish, Rev. xiv. 13.

Thus you see what a treasure it is which God offers you, if you will quit the world. Give over seeking your treasure on earth, and you will get treasure in heaven.

Objection. I am in no hazard of a treasure on earth. Answer. You are mistaken. You may have enough in heart though not in hand. The Spirit of God counts upon the former, and you must give up with it as well as the latter. What the heart dwells on, that is its possessions, and that you must part with.

And now are you for this blessed bargain or not? Hath the beauty of this treasure touched your hearts. If so, I have but two words of advice to you.

4. Make it your own by selling all, and buying the field where it is, Matth. xiii. 44. That is renouncing the world, and closing the gospel bargain with Christ.

2. Dig for it, Prov. ii. 4, 5. You were at pains and labour on the world's treasure. Will you not be at due pains about it. Man is a busy creature, he is always doing something. We call you not to more labour, but to other labours. The watch goes as fast when it goes wrong, as when right.

If you have no such heart as to part with the world for it, I declare to you, you shall have no part nor lot in it. This was our third doctrine. You shall as soon grasp heaven and earth at once, as get both. It is dear bought earth that is bought at the rate of the loss of heaven: thus death and life are set before you.

And now if there be any asking, how they may get their heart above the world, the answer from the doctrine is plain. Set the treasure in heaven in your view. This is the best way to sink the value of the world in your hearts.

Ettrick, September, 1710.

[Same Subject Continued.]

AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

SERMON XXXVII.

MARK x. 21. (Third Clause.)

And come, take up the cross, and follow me.

YOU have heard what all that have a mind for heaven must throw away, namely, the world; what they shall get at the end to take up in its stead, the treasure in heaven. But in the mean time they must take up the cross. By this is meant all the troubles and afflictions with which the Lord is pleased to exercise his people in the world, so called in reference to the cross on which Christ suffered.

Doctrine.—All that have a mind for heaven, as they must lay down the world, so they must take up the cross.—Here I shall,

I. Shew why the Christian's troubles are called the cross.

II. What it is to take up the cross. Let us then,

I. Shew why the Christian's troubles are called the cross. The wicked's troubles are not a cross, but a curse; those of the godly are not curses, but crosses. This is a name of honour, a sweet cake in which the bitter pill should be pleasantly received. As the man himself, so his troubles get a new name, when he comes to Christ.

1. Because by them the Christian's state in the world, is made like Christ's while he was in it. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." He met with the cross, and so must they, that they may be like him. If the head wore a cross, it were unbecoming the members to go without one. He was a man of sorrows, they must not be men of joys. Can the world that was a step-dame to him, be a natural mother to his?

2. Because the Christian's troubles go to the quick, as the cross did with Christ, in respect of which his former miseries were blunt. When God has a mind to let blood of the heart vein of a Christian by the lance of affliction, to cure him, he will make a deep wound. The troubles of the wicked often, but lightly, touch their sores, but when God rips his own people, he will go to the quick. God's killing arrows go deep enough into the heart of the wicked, but wounds for their cure, never. They want not their troubles.

But says the Psalmist, "they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men."

3. Because of the relation which they have to the cross of Christ. They are the cross set up again to Christ. *In all their afflictions he was afflicted.* They come very near him. *He that toucheth you*, saith he, *toucheth the apple of his eye.* The enemies set up the cross again for him in his members, after they had buried it with him, Acts ix. 4. His members are on it now; "and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ; in their flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." This agrees to all their afflictions. O! is not the cross lovely, while he is on it with us.

Their troubles are Christ's cross to them as he has left it. Christ in person took up the cross, and when he took it up there was a curse in it. He took away the curse out of it, and then left it, and bids them take it up without it, for he hath extracted the venom out of it. Now the tree is left, but the curse on it is gone. The nails are left to his people, but the venom in which they were dipped is gone. Though bulls should compass you about, they now want the horns, wherewithal they pierced him. Though poverty, shame, and crosses of all sorts are laid before you, if you be Christ's, you have but the carcase of these things wanting the soul and life, which the threatening of the law breathed into them.

Again, Their afflictions grow out of the cross of Christ. That tree was watered with the blood of the Son of God, no wonder then that it be fruitful. All the fruits laid up for Christ's beloved, for time and eternity grow upon it. But perhaps you will not expect the Christian's bitter troubles among them, but mistake not. They must either be curses or blessings. If curses they are not crosses, Gal. iii. 13. If blessings, where else will you find them. "For we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." They are the privileges of adoption, Heb. xii. 7, 8. Benefits of the covenant, Psalm lxxxix. 31, 32.

The comforts of Christ's sheep, Psalm xxiii. 4. Blessings which they thankfully acknowledge, Psalm cxix. 71. "therefore purchased by the blood of Christ, and promised to him in the covenant he made with the Father," Psalm lxxxix. 30. compare ver. 19—29. O how might we kiss our cross, looking thus on it. Farther to clear this, that we may learn not to be angry at our blessings. Consider, that grace grows on the cross of Christ as the root doubtless, but our cross is the branch on which it grows. "It is good for me, saith David, that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." See also Psalm xciv. 12, 13. Isa. xxvii. 9. See what a cluster hangs on the cross, Rom. v. 3—5. Not a stone thrown at a

child of God, but it is to him a precious stone. Every wind, however adverse it blows, speeds him to his harbour. Our cross also is the branch on which glory grows. "If we suffer we shall also reign with Christ. Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

4. Because the Christian's cross is a cross indeed. But to whom? Not to his graces. Indeed troubles may be a cross to the hypocrite's seeming graces, on which they may breathe out their last, Matth. xiii. 6. His heap of chaff may bulk well till the wind rise, and his house on the sand may stand till the storms blow. Job's friends preached sound doctrine, though they erred in the application, chap. iv. 4—6. Many a one's faith, patience, love, &c. are like Job's friends. *In trouble they deal deceitfully as a brook. They are nothing*, chap. vi. 15.—21.

But not one of the real graces ever yet died upon a cross. Nay, it is as cold water cast on the face of a fainting person, it is a comfort that revives them, not a cross to kill them. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." The candle burns brightest in the dark, and the fire hottest in a frost. Many a wonnd ease and prosperity have given to real grace, for the cure of which the cross hath been sent to them. But,

It is a cross to their corrupt will, that never goes right as long as it gets head. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." The flesh would soon wax wanton if it were not nailed to the cross. The bullock unaccustomed to the yoke of resignation must be tamed by the cross. And many a cross that unreasonable beast will take ere it be broken. The more that things go according to our will, it is the more fed, and the readier to kick against the Lord; but God in his providence crossing it, it is weakened, and made more pliable to the will of God. The soul *becomes as a weaned child. It yields and returns to the Lord.*

The cross is also a cross to the Christian's particular lusts, Hosea ii. 6, 7. It will cross our hopes, and so check our pride, or draw away some earth from us that was drawing us away from God. When a lust is drawing away a Christian from God, he will send the cross as he did Abigail to meet David; the storm to meet Jonah when fleeing from the presence of the Lord. If we were not too much one with our lusts, our crosses would sit lighter upon us, seeing they cross nothing but our corruptions. We now proceed,

II. To shew what it is to take up the cross. It imports,

1. That we are to wait for our cross till God lay it down before us. We are not to make up, but take up our cross that is made to our hand. Hence it is called the cross of Christ, and in respect of

the bearer his cross, Matth. xvi. 24. not that which he made to himself, but that which God made his. A man makes his cross when he goes out of his way to seek a cross. It should be brought to us, and laid down at our door. We are not called to go to it. If a man be diligent in his business, and yet poverty come on him, let him cheerfully take up what God hath laid down to him; but if he be negligent, and thereby become poor, his cross is his sin, he can have little comfort in it, it is of his own making. Some say, we will not leave our kirks, stipends, and warm firesides, I pray we may be helped to take up that cross when God lays it down before us, and when it comes, to be able to answer that question satisfyingly, "Who hath required these things at your hand?" A cross of men's own making, may well feed their pride, it is not a fit mean for nourishing their graces, Colos. ii. 18—21.

Again, A man makes his cross, when the cross has no existence but in his own foolish imagination. How often are people's minds made the devil's shop for making crosses to themselves, racking themselves with groundless suspicions and imaginations, and making mountains of mole-hills. Satan thus makes a forge of their mischievous tempers.

2. God will lay down the cross before every one that has a mind for heaven. *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, so that they shall have nothing to do but take it up.—He will lay it down before every one, to some of one sort, to others of another, Matth. xvi. 24. God had one Son without sin, but never a son without the cross. *For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not.*

Question, But when does the Lord lay down the cross before us? *Answer*, When there is no lawful way to escape it, that is, when we must either suffer or sin, Heb. x. 35. When the devil desired our Saviour to cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple, this was a cross of the devil's own making, because the stairs were at hand, and he had no lawful call to work a miracle. When God hath left no way to escape, the cross is bound on by the holy hand of providence.

3. We must notice the cross which the Lord lays down, otherwise we cannot take it up. It is a dreadful sign of a very desperate case when men say, "They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." This is gross stupidity. Many are like a blind man, that receives blows, but never sees the hand from whence they come. God is braying them with want, poverty, losses, and crosses of many sorts, yet they never have power to look to the Lord's hand in these things, or once to smite on their thigh, and

say, *What have I done; shew why thou contendest with me*, Jer. v. 3. They have many plagues of darkness upon earth, but never once inquire into the cause.

4. We must not tread on the cross, and step over it, but take it up; we are ready to have courage against God, though but little for him. That sullen manliness, and Roman courage with which some bear their crosses, is rather a despite against God, than a taking up of the cross. When heaven is our party, it is time to stoop, and not make our faces like flint, lest God be provoked to dash us in pieces.

5. We must not fall a fainting at the sight of it. The exhortation is, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." In this state we cannot take up the cross. O how ready are we to faint at the sight of the cross, and to say, *my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.* To be sinking under discouragement by the cross is not the way to bear it; nay, it is next step to going out of God's way to avoid the cross, Heb. xii. 12, 13.

6. We must not go about the cross when it lies from side to side in our way. Some people will shift the cross by going off that part of the way where it lies, in hopes to come into it again when they are past that place. But take heed, it is easy going off, but it is not so easy coming on the way of duty again. There are pits on every hand, quagmires of sin and sorrows also, in which you may stick so fast as never to get out again, 1 Tim. vi. 9.

7. We must not stand still till it be rolled out of the way. To follow Christ in the summer of prosperity, and in the winter of adversity to forsake his company, till the weather clear again is a sign self-love is stronger than our love to Christ. Such persons are time-servers, and not servants to Christ. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Though a Red sea be before us, we must go forward, Exod. xiv. 15, 16.

8. We should take up no more than what God hath laid down, not what the devil and our own corruptions add to it. God laid down barrenness to Rachel, and she laid death on her cross, Gen. xxx. 1. How often do we hang weights of our own on the cross, and then complain we cannot lift it. We are for the most part in the dark about crosses, and then mole-hills appear mountains. But when the Lord clears the soul to let it see the naked cross, it appears much less. Paul's troubles were none of the least, but he sees them to be light and momentary. Lightness itself is swift as a hart, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

4. We are to make no choice but take up even the hardest trials which God lays before us; as the cross was a most painful death. We must be ready not only to run with footmen, but contend with horses. "I am ready, said Paul, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Neither a choice of commands, nor crosses becomes a Christian. The shoulder must not refuse the hardest piece of service. We are apt to think that we could bear any trial but the one that God hath laid upon us, but this only discovers our own ignorance, and imperfect resignation.

10. We must take up the cross willingly. God can lay it on whether we will or not; but he will have us to take it up willingly, though not wilfully. "My brethren, says the apostle James, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations." When you fall by the providence of God, not when you cast yourselves into them. We must not be like the refractory bullock, that will not receive the yoke; but as the camel that falls down on his knees, till his master lay on his burden. So Eli, 1 Samuel iii. 18. Acts ix. 6. Lament. iii. 30.

Lastly, We bear it cheerfully. We are not to take it up, to fall down with it, and sink under it. Believers *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods*. There are riches in the cross, and the believer will discern them. *They will have respect unto the recompense of reward.*— Goodness is in it, and he will see it, Isa. xxxix. 8. It is no strange thing to the Christian, 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13. There is strange satisfaction and sweetness in the cross to them that find them out. There is a sweetness in a man's seeing himself on his trials for heaven, standing candidate for glory; in passing these mountains where they see the marks of Christ's footsteps before them; in seeing how a good God crosses their corrupt inclinations, and prevents their folly; in seeing the thieves on the cross, and God starving their lusts so as they may not be ungovernable; and to see that paradise that is within this hedge of thorns.

In this way it must be borne till the Lord take it down. It is his work to take off the cross, ours to take it up. *Let patience have her perfect work.* It is sad to see persons when brought into afflictions, to be driven out of themselves, to be running away in a rage, with God's arrows sticking fast in them. *In your patience possess your souls.*

Inference 1. Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial. Nothing more unreasonable, and yet more common than to be surprised with a cross. We often look at the meeting with it, as if we had forgotten that article of our indentures. If public trials come upon

the land or church, be not surprised, or when private crosses do befal you. It has been, must, and will be the lot of all that have a mind for heaven. There is a cup of bitterness designed for Christ mystical, of which every one of his must drink their share.

2. They that cast out with the cross, do in effect cast out with heaven. Though it be a rough way, it is the highway to it. It is the fire with which God tries what metal is fit to be made a vessel of honour, and it is a most dreadful token to be cast here as dross, Jer. vi. 29, 30. Think on that you that are not made better, but rather worse under your afflictions. If you could think in every cross, now God hath me on my trials for eternity, you would take heed that you forced not out a sentence against yourselves, Phil. iii. 18, 19.

3. Lay your account with it, and be looking for it. A man forewarned is half armed. Job stood like an adamant wall against the bitter blasts. Why? "For, said he, the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. Why should we think to sleep to heaven in a bed of roses, when others have gone before us through thorns and briars? If you have given yourself to Christ, you must shew your faith by your works. If there be life in a tree, it will abide a winter blast.

Lastly, Take kindly with the cross of Christ. It is a kindly name to the Christian, and all his afflictions public or private bear it. Let your back bow to it, and your heart not rise against it. Be not angry if you be marked among his sheep, with the fire-mark *of a fiery trial.* It may well consume dross, it will not consume gold. Do not murmur against the Lord, he knows well enough how to guide the world, and what is best for every one. Say not, "There is no sorrow like my sorrow. Every heart knows its own bitterness." But ordinarily the slaughter ox hath been best fed; and they for whom the Lord had the greatest kindness have drunk deepest of the bitter cup. You may observe that those have been laid lowest, who have been most eminent for piety, for gifts, for manifestations of the Lord's kindness, and great benefits; witness Job, Heman, Paul, Jacob, David.

I come now to the last duty, *Follow me*, taking up the cross, as the words run in the Greek, or having taken up the cross.

Doctrine.—All that have a mind for heaven, must follow Christ, with that cross which he lays before them. They must be like *Simon the Cyrenian, who did bear the cross after Jesus.* I will shew,

I. In what respects they must follow Christ. In these two.

1. They must follow him in profession. So he would have this

man to follow him, to profess himself one of his disciples, and go with him as the rest of his disciples did. A profession is indispensably necessary.—Jesus will not allow any of his to say, What, take ye me for a saint? Those that are his, "have his Father's name written in their foreheads, and these are they, even the hundred forty and four thousand, which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. They confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, as well as believe with the heart, that God hath raised him from the dead. For with the heart, man believed unto righteousness; and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." If there be fire on the hearth, smoke will come out at the chimney. *He is the high priest of our profession;* and that profession is to be made with the mouth, even when the cross is on the back. This *profession we must hold fast.* This Jesus Christ himself did *when before Pontius Pilate, he witnessed a good confession.*

Now there are two things which fall under the Christian profession.

1. Holiness of life. It is a holy profession, and a profession of holiness. Hence Christians are called, *holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.* The light of their good works must not only burn *but shine.* "They must be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; among whom they are to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."—They are to hold it forth as towers on the coast side on which lights are erected to direct sailors in the night. No lover of holiness but will profess himself such.

2. The truths of Christ. Errors and heresies fall under the black mark, and are arranged by the apostle along with the other works of the flesh, Gal. v. 19—21. It is an awful judgment, when God sends men, *strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.* God is the God of truth. Lies of all sorts are from the devil. We must adhere to the known truths of God, and his ordinances in their purity on all hazards. "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom and instruction, and understanding." We must testify against all corruptions of word and ordinances; and when error, superstition, or idolatry threaten us, we must be ready to take up our cross and follow Christ. Some complain the ordinances are already corrupted among us, not knowing whereof they affirm. That there are corruptions in our management of all God's ordinances, we acknowledge, and so must they for themselves; and if we both acknowledge not this, neither will they nor we see heaven. If they would follow their principle the length it would lead them, they should have no communion amongst themselves; nay, nor one of them with himself, unless they think that they are in greater hazard from the corruptions of others,

than from their own. Where our additions to Christ's institutions, or what are those institutions of this church with which she hath mixed his institutions. Take heed this absurd mistake be not cured by ordinances corrupted indeed. Our contempt of Christ's ordinances is the highway to it, Deut. xxviii. 64. Isa. viii. 6, 7. But come what will, "let us earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints. For whosoever, saith Jesus, shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

We must follow Christ in practice. "He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked." Christ hath presented to us the copy of a holy life, we must write after it, if ever we would see heaven. *I have given you*, says he, *an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.* No less example of imitation doth the Christian propose to himself. "For every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." His conversation is the compass by which we must steer our course, if ever we reach the shore of Immanuel's land. I will not launch forth into this extensive field, but content myself with directing your attention to four parts of it.

I. We must follow him in his humility. In this he was most exemplary. From the highest pitch of glory, he descended as low as he could, Phil. ii. 7, 8. *He washed the disciples' feet.* He was the very pattern of self-denial, meekness and lowliness. Good reason had he to say, "learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart." Alas! how few followers. By this you must correct your pride. Pride makes men like the devil, and most unlike Christ. He emptied himself of his glory, and can you be his followers, that fill and swell yourselves with an opinion of yourselves? How low did he stoop, and yet alas! how unwilling are many of us to yield?

Your passion. O fiery professors are you the followers of the meek and humble Jesus? You cannot abide to be controled, "but he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." The Samaritans would not receive him, the disciples "would have had him to cause fire come down from heaven to consume them," but he shewed it was not his Spirit that moved them to it.

Correct also your selfishness. Self-seeking professors look very unlike self-denying Jesus. *I seek not*, said he, *mine own glory.* It was prophesied of him, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." This was fully accomplished in him, John vii. 3, 4. But alas, the religion of many is nothing but a Babel tower to exalt themselves upon, *that they may be seen of men.*

How do they haunt for applause, and when that empty wind fills the sail, how quickly will they make way.

2. In his contempt of the world. The profits of it were of no account with him. *He had not where to lay his head.* The pleasures of it, he despised. He often wept, sighed, never was seen to laugh, very seldom to rejoice, and that not from the smiles of the world, which he never regarded nor sought.

By this learn to correct *the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.* These are the gods which many worship. Their eyes are windows at which sinful objects enter into the soul, and at which the heart goes out after the world. The flesh often consumes all the vigour of the spirits, and men walk as if they were nothing but flesh. The vain pride of life, in honour, ambition, and pomp, carry away men as a stream.

3. In his patience under the cross. His cross was infinitely heavy, but he endured all with untainted patience, not the least murmuring was ever heard from him. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." He would not revenge the injuries done to him, so much as by words. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not." His soul was wrapt up in an absolute resignation to the will of God. *Not my will,* said he, *but thine be done.*

By this learn to correct your murmurings and uneasy bearing of the cross. Did he as a sheep not open his mouth, and shall we "with the wicked, roar like a wild bull in a net." Look to Jesus and be ashamed, that the cross feels so hard upon your shoulders, Heb. xii. 1, 2.

Lastly, Let us follow him in heavenliness of conversation. His whole life was an uninterrupted course of walking with God. Often he sent away his disciples from him, spending whole nights in secret. His discourse was already heavenly. Whatever occurred he was ready to spiritualize it. So that on earth he lived in heaven. By this learn to correct your carnality.—We are ready too much, and too frequently *to mind earthly things.* How unlike Christ while heavenly things are so little minded; meditation and converse about them are very rare. But we must follow him, if ever we see heaven. He will be imitated as a pattern by all those who experience the efficacy of his blood. And surely many of us must turn over a new leaf if we fall on this way.

But I will shut up this with some improvement. You have now heard much of the way you must take, if ever you see heaven. What

are you resolved upon? Are you resolved for heaven or not? I think I may take you all up in five classes.

1. I fear there are some of you, that have never yet thought seriously upon the matter, now how can they be resolved? You that are young, have you thought upon the question yet? Have you ever been made to stand still and seriously inquire what was necessary for your eternal welfare? You that are older, when was the time that you gave this question a serious consideration? When was it that it kept you longer out of your bed than usual; that it disturbed your rest or raised you sooner to pursue the subject? Alas for many of our regular hearers that kept nothing of what they hear in their hearts, Ezek. xxxii. 31—33. The day is coming "they will lift up their eyes in hell being in torments."

2. Some have thought on it, but they are not yet come to a conclusion. When there is much halting between two opinions in the vitals of religion, no wonder it be so in less matters. Heaven is very desirable, but sin is sweet. Treasure in heaven is good, but treasure on earth is good also. You wot not what to do. Conscience says, go forward; corruption says, nay, stand still a while yet. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." I believe there are some now in hell that were once as far forward as you. I think you should not take so long to advise on whether you will enter or not; for when the door is once shut, in vain will you plead for admission, Prov. i. 24.—33.

Perhaps there are some that in effect have resolved against it; saying, *there is no hope, no: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* These are sullen desperate sinners, who are black hot in the fire of despair without noise. They have had their convictions, they have attempted reformation, but it would not do. Corruption has broken out on them, as the breaking forth of waters; hence they have given over hope, and dropped their endeavours, and stand to be carried whatever way the stream of their lusts leads them. O wretched generation, there is but one step between you and everlasting destruction. Brimstone is scattered upon your habitation, there wants but fire to make it consume you, Job xviii. 15.

4. Some that are resolved for heaven if they can obtain it at their own offer. Like this man in the text, heaven would be crowded if sinners could get liberty to blot out and interline words in the covenant here and there. If people could but retain a right eye, a right hand, a Delilah, Zoar a little one. But it will not do. *All* or *nothing.*

5. I hope there are some resolved upon it, cost what it will.

They are peremptory. Well you must sell all, take up your cross, and follow Christ. I would have you then to resolve to follow Christ with the cross on your back.

1. Resolve to take up and follow Christ with your ordinary cross. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Every day has the evil thereof, whatever may be left of former days. Evil to increase the heap, and men may bring forward of the following day.—*Asaph was plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning.* You must not expect one day fair to an end while here. Whether God lay down this cross by his immediate hand, or otherwise, you must take it up. What a vain thing is it to expect dry cheeks in the valley of tears; or that in such a place the clouds will not return after the rain. Daily sinning brings daily crosses. The thieves will never be brought off the cross till their life be extinguished.

2. Your holyday cross. The roll that was spread before Jeremiah, "was written within and without, and there was written therein, lamentations, and mourning, and woe." It is the same word that is used to signify the solemnities in which the Jews were gathered about the temple by the appointment of God. It signifies a stated time of meeting. Here is a solemnity of another nature, a solemn rendezvous of enemies against the church of God, for which God hath set his times, it is not every day. On this you must resolve also. The church of God amongst us, hath had a day of feasting of considerable length; it is like we may see a solemn day of terror on the back of it. Many a bitter storm hath blown out against the church, and it cannot be thought but the clouds will return after the rain, Rev. viii. 9.

1. Consider, we have had the Lord's talents among our hands these twenty years, and it is reasonable to think God will put it to the trial what we have made of them. Can it be but there will come a time in which we will be put to trial, what we have made of all the sermons and communions that we have enjoyed. Now the cross is God's trying piece, Matth. vii. 24—27.

2. There are many who have followed Christ on plain ground very closely, that have shined in holiness of life in the time of outward peace in the church. They have given as it were but half evidence of their love to Christ, and that also the easiest half; they must even give fuller evidence of it, by cleaving to him in a time of tribulation. It will bring more glory to God.

3. There are many that have the root of the matter in them, that need to have it awaked with a storm.—Many sleeping Jonahs in our ship. Much filth and blood gathered by ease to be taken away

by the Spirit of judgment, James iv. 4. When the trees of God's vineyard begin to sit up, he will open them at the root, and let in the winter storm.

4. There are many professors among us, that have more sail than ballast; their heads are too light for their hearts. If there be any thing in them at all, and God have a kindness for them, he will lay some weight upon them to bring them to a consistency, that will make weight more, and bulk less in their own eyes.

5. There are many that have taken up a profession that have nothing of Christ but the name. They are among God's wheat, but are none of it; others are the worse of them, they must be cut up with God's axe as cumberers of the ground; and when there are fewer professors, they will likely be better.

6. The appetite for the word with many is lost, and it is unfruitful. The edge is off our spirits. The preaching of the gospel is not much regarded. Many make silent sabbaths to themselves: and so little comfort have people in their ministers, and ministers in their people, that it looks very like a parting.

Lastly, Enemies have a cup to fill up, they have filled it well already; but it is like they have more yet to do, to prepare them for an overthrow. Turn your face then heavenwards, and be resolved to cleave to Christ, and all will be well. The cross will never ruin the church. The more they were oppressed the more they grew. God makes the devil's lackeys run his errands, and what they mean for evil turns to good. She shall not lose one living member. Dross may be consumed, but gold cannot; but it is refined in the fire. Let the sieve be as large as it will, not one good grain shall be lost.

But as for those that will not take up the cross and follow Christ, God will lay his curse as another sort of weight upon them. Following him under the cross, is the right way of bearing it.

Ettrick, September, 1710.

[Same Subject Continued.]

AMIABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

SERMON XXXVIII.

MARK X. 22.

And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

WE have here the lamentable issue of the conference. The man is offended, and leaves the Saviour, rejecting his words. We have,

His departure. *He went away*, not as Christ bade him to sell all, but to sit down on his possessions, to hug his beloved idol, never to come back again. Here he left Christ, rejected his company instead of following him, left the treasure in heaven which he would not purchase as Christ offered it.

He went away *sad* and *grieved*. Sad, with a sad, cloudy, dejected countenance; grieved at the heart, as the words may be distinguished. The first of these words is rendered, lowring, Matth. xvi. 3. He was morally serious in his desire of life; hence real grief in the heart for the disappointment, and the appearance of it in his countenance. The cause of his sadness was that saying, verse 21. That was the thing which affected him. The word rendered sad, signifies a mixture of sorrow and hatred. He loved the treasure in heaven, but he hated the cross. He loved heaven, but he hated the parting with the world as hell, as that word also imports. Hence deep sorrow, on being deprived of that which he did so much desire.

Now what made him so sad at that saying? What reason had he to be displeased at it? *He had great possessions.* But what of that? So had Abraham, Moses, Job, and others; and they were put to the same trial; and yet they did cleave stedfastly to the Lord. But alas! this man's possessions had a much surer hold of him, than he had of them. This way of expressing it teaches, that it is hard for them that have possessions to part with them.

Doctrine I. It is difficult to have much of the world, and not to be ruined by it. This is a strange *For*, in the text. He was a man that had great possessions, and God has not many of that sort. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." To confirm this, consider,

1. That plain testimony given to this truth, by truth itself on this occasion, in the three verses which follow the text. In these the ground of the reasoning is, that it is a most difficult thing to have riches, and not to trust in them; difficult to have the staff in the hand, and not to lean upon it.

2. They that have much of the world, have many snares, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Satan hath many handles by which to hold them, which he hath not for others. "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." While the lusts of others by want have fuel drawn from them, they have much fuel added to theirs, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. The more of the world that men have, they have the stronger temptations. We have that within that inclines us to court the world even when it frowns; how difficult must it then be to be kept from drowning in the embraces of a smiling world?

3. Very few rich men are found good men, 1 Cor. i. 26. O how few have the art of carrying a full cup even! Of frowning on the world when it smiles on them. Most part of such have their portion in this life. Many have been injured by the world's smiles, but it is difficult to find those that have been made better by them. The sweetness of temporal things, usually makes spiritual things tasteless. *The full soul loatheth an honey-comb.*

Use 1. Hence we may fairly account for that, why the meaner sort of people make up the greatest part of Christ's followers in the world. Why there are so few that have great possessions to be seen among them.—Be not stumbled at it, for that very thing which makes them most capable to be useful to God, if they had grace to guide it, suits so with their corruptions, that it makes them greater enemies to God and his way than others. The unicorn's horn is a precious thing, and if it were in the hand of a skilful artificer he could do good with it; but while it is in the beast's head it is dangerous and hurtful. What can be expected of that man that hath no grace, much opportunity to be vile, many snares and temptations. Such persons are to be pitied, seeing they have no restraint neither from within nor without. God in mercy keeps much of the world out of the hands of the most part of those for whom he hath a kindness; because it is so difficult to manage it, and not be ruined by it. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." If the world were such a desirable thing as men's corruptions say it is, would the children ordinarily have so little, and the dogs get so much of it? No surely.

2. To those that are rich we would give that charge, "that you

be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." Rich people may be good though it but seldom falls out so. Be upon your guard. Poverty is a snare to many this day, that is like to ruin them eternally. Riches are no less a snare whatever they be more. Be not puffed up with them, trust not in them. If you have more snares than others, you had need of more grace, and to be more watchful.

3. To those that are pinched with the world, be content with such things as you have, do not hasten to be rich. Why should men be so desirous of that which it is so difficult to have, and not be ruined with it? Can you guide your little so well, that you must needs have more? The bait is indeed pleasant, but O how difficult to touch it, and not be caught with the hook! And in such a time as this it is most unsuitable; the more we have to lose, it will be the harder to part with it, Jer. xlv. 4, 5. This brings me to,

Doctrine II. That the cross will greatly lessen the number of those that are in Christ's company in time of ease. The cross is a great discoverer of unsound professors. To confirm this, I will tell you four things which the cross hath done.

1. It hath checked that briskness of Spirit in religion, which many have had till it came, Matth. viii. 19, 20. Mark x. 17—22. There are many very forward while they meet with no opposition, that shrink back at the appearance of the cross; like the flowers that open when the sun shines; but shut and are contracted at night, and in cloudy days.

2. It has extracted the sap out of religion to many, Matth. xiii. 20, 21. They have had some delight in it, but when the waters of trying afflictions for it come to be mixed therewith it proves altogether bitter. Even as the Jews with Christ, Mal. iii. 1—3. Isa. viii. 21. The cross so embitters some spirits that they lose all heart and hand to religion, raging under it as a wild bull in a net.

3. It has fed and nourished the spiritual lusts of many, that are like salamanders which can live well in the fire. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity it profiteth me nothing." It is not the bearing of the cross simply that proves a saint, but the following of Christ with the cross on our backs. Papists worship the cross, and Protestants may put it in Christ's room, 2 Cor. xi. 12—15.

4. It has had many apostates, who have quit Christ's side, and joined themselves to the devil's party, and turned persecutors of the way in which they walked before. Many fearful examples of this, trying times have given. The best meat corrupted, smells most abominably; apostates are like incarnate devils; as in these

that sin against the Holy Ghost. None come to such heights as they do.

Reasons of the point.—1. Because the religion of many is a building reared up in a hasty manner, so cannot abide the storm. They count not the cost, Luke xiv. 25—33. Want of deliberation in taking on a profession makes it quickly go when that meets them that they were not thinking of. They stumble when they come to the cross.

2. Because they want a root of grace they cannot be fixed, Matth. xiii. 21. There is a root which establisheth against falling away, as when a tree takes with the ground. "A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved." A house built on sand is in hazard by a storm. Lamps without oil will not do for a dark night. Many pools dry up in drought.

3. Because the cross strikes at the very pillar that supported them. When Samson removed the pillars the house could not but fall. Many pretend faith in Christ, who are nevertheless borne up by the world, and when that goes they cannot stand, as we see in the text. It is Christ and the world together that give the man the ease; now when they part, he is as a bird which hath one wing clipped and so cannot fly.

Use 1. Be not then desirous of days of trial. It is to be regretted that some who wish well to Zion, their hearts are not trembling for the ark, but rather showing a kind of fondness of trials for the discovery of the unfaithfulness of others, and their own zeal for God. At leisure, ye know not what spirits ye are of. Many that have as little doubted their standing have deceived both themselves and others. Often has it been seen that they that have said most have done least.

2. Be not offended when in a day of trial you see men thronging away from Christ as fast as to him now. The gold is not the worse that the dross is consumed in the fire. The falls of some are like that of an oak, making many fall with it. But know that all is not gold that glitters now. No doubt many will leave Christ, that now look not like it.

Lastly, Be preparing for a trying time. Winter will inquire what summer hath done. It is good to foresee the cross, and make ready for it, and to hear for the time to come.

Labour to get the foundation surely laid. Dig deep and build on the rock. A small stock of grace will go farther than great gifts. Make the covenant secure, the marriage-covenant betwixt Christ and your souls. And try it now by what communication is be-

twixt him and your souls. It will be sad if you never know the pipe laid short of the fountain till the cross come.—Again, Inure yourself to sit loose to the world, and all you have therein. They are as a leg that must be cut off at last. It is best to be deadening the same now. It will go the easier.

Finally, Study to carry your ordinary cross properly. Try to run with the footmen; that will help you to contend with horses. Consider carefully the directions given to us, 1 Peter iii. 14—17.

Doctrine III. A person may take his farewell of Christ and holiness, with a grieved heart, and dejected countenance. Some go merrily away from the ways of God, as a wanton beast when it is turned loose. But all go not so. But if they be sorry for it, may you say, why do they go away? And if they will not stay, why are they sorry? So it is, however, as we see from this example: one sighing, and going backward, Lam. i. 8. We have another instance in Orpah, Ruth i. 15. "She lifted up her voice with her mother-in-law, and wept when she left her, and the God of Israel at once." On this passage we may observe, 1. That Orpah had as fair a pretence for what Ruth met with as she had. And that was, she became David's grandmother, and so one of the mothers of our Lord, Matth. i. 5, 6.—Now it would seem that Orpah was the eldest son's wife, Ruth i. 2, 4. Compare Gen. xxix. 6. And indeed God's choice we find has often gone that way, as in the cases of Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob.

2. Orpah was once as fair set on the way to leave her father's house and her people, and go to the land of Judah, as Ruth was, verse 7, 8; and doubtless it was with an eye to embrace the Jewish religion, ver. 15, 17. Now the land of Judah was the holy land, where God manifested himself, Psalm lxxvi. 1, 2. Hence it is called the presence of the Lord, Jonah i. 3. As the visible church, Gen. iv. 16.

3. She was once so fond of this happy change, that she could not endure to hear of giving it up. The very mentioning of it brought tears from her eyes, verse 9. She was very peremptory that nothing should hold her back. *We will not leave thee, but go to thy people.* As a certain scribe said to Jesus, *Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*, so she was disposed to say to her mother-in-law. But,

4. When Orpah more narrowly considers what she was likely to meet with in this new way on which she was entering of changing her God, her resolution quickly breaks, and she goes back. And that was the reason why Naomi desired them to return, namely, that they might not put their hand to the plough, unless they were fitted to ride out every storm.

5. Naomi herself, her people, her God, were dear to Orpah; but a husband was yet dearer to her than them all. She would rather have her own gods with a husband, than the God of Israel without one. Therefore finally she parts with all, and goes back to her gods with a grieved heart and wet cheeks, verse 14, 15. She cannot go with them, and yet is very sorry to part with them. O! if there had been but an husband you could have promised me in that land of Judah; if I could have but lived there, as I may live at home, I should never have preferred my people to yours, or my gods to your God. But back to her gods she goes however, and so lost all the glorious advantages which she might have reaped from such a change.

Reasons of the point.—1. Because, though sin be bitter to them, yet the want of it is more bitter. They have not much ease in the enjoyment of their lusts, but they can have none without them. "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." God plants a hedge of thorns and briars about some people's lusts, that if they will be at them, their flesh shall be torn in the way. Well, but the beast will rather break through that, than endure raging hunger within. As long as the sweet of sin masters the sour of it, the sinner will drink it up though it make them shrink. Therefore God always puts more and more bitterness in it, to his elect, till bitterness be predominant, Eccles. vii. 26.

2. Christ is sweet to the man, but his lusts are sweeter; hence if he could get both he would part with none of them; but seeing he cannot do this, he parts with Christ indeed, but with a grieved heart, as in the text. What a hankering had Orpah, how unwilling to leave Naomi. Christ will never get a soul truly home to himself, till he effectually outbid all others, Prov. chap. vii. compared with chap. viii. particularly verses 18—21. People may say what they will of their sweet Saviour, but as long as their sweet lusts are sweeter, they will, like Esau, part with the inheritance for present gratification. The blessing was sweet to Esau after the mess of pottage was digested, Gen. xxvii. 38. But when the two were in a balance, and he behoved to part with one of them, they weighed down the blessing by far, Gen. xxv. 30. Hebrew, *Let me taste I pray of that red, That red; that, that.* But verse 32. Hebrew, *But for what is that to me a birth-right.*

3. Because their light is strong, but their lusts are stronger. The first lets them see Christ, and that holiness is desirable, and puts them forward, the latter draws them back. Thus they are tossed betwixt the two, though they must needs yield to the stronger as in the cases of Balaam and Pilate. Thus they part with Christ as

Phaltiel with Michal, 2 Sam. iii. 15, 16. The love of his life was strong, but the love of his lusts was stronger. The consciences of many encounter much resistence before they can get back to their lusts. "They are of those that rebel against the light, they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." Lusts rise against light, and drive the man out of the paths of it. They abide not in the paths thereof, leaving conscience overcome; they know not, or acknowledge not, the laws of light, therefore they rebel against it.

4. They do not find what they expected in Christ. This is plain from the text. And disposes men to go away drooping. The disciples were almost carried off their feet with this. "But we trusted, said they, that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done." This quickly overturned that man, Matth. viii. 19—21. When a man is so sick that he looks for nothing but death, he gives away all for life, thinking if he had health, he could be content to beg his bread with it; but when he gets it he finds that will not do, he must have wealth again. So when people feel remorse of conscience, they would give any thing for ease, but when they have it, they often return to their old ways. The mixed multitude of Egyptians who gladly joined with Israel at first, Exod. xii. 38.—When instead of a Canaan they find a wilderness; they soon remembered their former enjoyments, and longed to return to them, Numb. xi. 4, 5. The newness of the gospel makes a great commotion among the hypocrite's affections, then O how sweet is religion, prayers, sermons, and communions! But all the time there is no spring of grace in the heart which would last, and *be a well of water springing up to everlasting life.* Now it is not possible but his commotion must subside when once the novelty is gone, and then they thirst again after their lusts as much as ever. And Christ, and ordinances, and all turn tasteless to them; as a tale that they have heard over and over again. They find not God in his ordinances, and what they found is gone; hence they are as twice dead, and plucked up by the root.

Lastly, They desire to be at heaven, but they have no heart for the rugged way to it as in the text. *The desire of the slothful man killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.* He hath a mouth to wish for it, but no hands to labour for it. As a man that would be over a water, but it is so large he dare not venture to take it. They want *that other spirit*, Numb. xiv. 24. that would steel their foreheads with resoluteness against all difficulties. They love the gold but cannot dig for it; and leave it with a grieved heart.

Inference 1. It is very natural for backsliders and apostates to return to their lusts with more greediness than ever. It is plain they do, 2 Peter ii. 20—22. compare Matth. xii. 44, 45. For they are then like swine that have been kept clean a while, or as beasts freed from their confinement. But there is more in it, they have left Christ and holiness with a grieved heart, and they stand in need of something to comfort them more than others that never saw any beauty in religion, and they must do their best to draw that out of their lusts.—They have need of floods of lusts, because they have conscience to drown in them which others have not.

2. A warm side to religion is not enough, if people have not a warm heart to it. The warm side may burn in hell for ever. What is that but that people love Christ well, but love their lusts better. "He that loveth father or mother, saith Jesus, more than me, is not worthy of me;" therefore he loves me in some measure. Take heed to this,

You that think you keep a good heart to God, though you make not much noise about religion; that is, though there is nothing indeed of it in your life, and you never knew what it was to sacrifice a lust to his pleasure. *The heart of the wicked is little worth.*

You also that mean well, and always would fain be religious, and amend your lives, but yet you never do it. *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.* You are not so desirous of Christ as of your lusts yet; and what does he regard these your meanings? You have a hankering after Christ and religion, and what of that? So had this man. Why are you almost, and not altogether Christians?

Again, you also that sooth yourselves with this, that while you are living in sin, without endeavouring to mortify your lusts; your outbreakings in them are against your will, and you wish you could help it, but never seriously apply yourselves to help it. It is not against your will, it is but against your conscience; and if you hold on a while, it may come to that, your conscience may be quite dead, and seared as with a hot iron, and may travel with equal pace with that will of yours that loves idols, and after them will go, and will not come to Christ for life.

Lastly, this writes death to them that have had their convictions, and have been endeavouring amendment, but found it would not do; and therefore they have given it over, and they are sorry for it that it would not do with them. Still they hope all may be well. I would have you to review that, your solemn farewell given to Christ. The best that can be made of it is, that you were sad at that saying, and went away grieved, and bade him farewell, and so parted with him, but with the tear in your eye. Amen.

THE

SOVEREIGNTY AND WISDOM OF GOD

DISPLAYED IN THE

AFFLICTIONS OF MEN,

TOGETHER WITH A CHRISTIAN DEPORTMENT UNDER THEM.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

SEVERAL SERMONS

ON

ECCLES. vii. 13. PROV. xvi. 19. AND 1 PET. v. 6.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SOME SERMONS

ON THE NATURE OF

CHURCH COMMUNION,

FROM 1 COR. x. 17.

TO THE READER.*

HABITUAL unreconciledness to the cross, and a palpable deficiency in many of the duties incumbent on us, as members of the body of Christ, mightily mar our Christian comfort, our edification, our usefulness: and instead of adorning, they cast a dark shade on our holy profession. For remedy in both cases, the Lord in his kind providence is sending us fresh assistance in the two following treatises. Both the subjects are set in a new and engaging light. It is not amiss that the reader should know, that the former, namely, that of the Crook in one's lot, was among the last subjects the blessed author handled; and that the revising of it so far (for he got not through his notes) was amongst his last works with the pen. We shall leave it to exercise the reader's attention how far he himself revised; and where we have only his notes as he preached them. May the same divine blessing, which the author often and earnestly sought to accompany ought of his that was, or should be called forth for the service of the church, go along with these treatises that here follow.

* To these treatises there was formerly prefixed a preface, signed by the Reverend Messrs. Colden, Wilson, and Davidson, giving a short account of the author's life. This is not now deemed necessary here, as the complete edition of the "Memoirs" will be published, and will form the concluding volume of the Works.—EDIT.

THE CROOK IN THE LOT.

ECCLESIASTES vii. 13.

Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?

A JUST view of afflicting incidents is altogether necessary to a Christian deportment under them: and *that* view is to be obtained only by faith, not by sense. For it is the light of the *word* alone that represents them justly, discovering in them *the work of God*, and consequently designs becoming the divine perfections. These perceived by the eye of faith, and duly *considered*, one has a just view of afflicting incidents, fitted to quell the turbulent motions of corrupt affections under dismal outward appearances.

It is under this view, that Solomon, in the preceding part of this chapter, advances several paradoxes, which are surprising determinations in favour of certain things, that to the eye of sense, looking gloomy and hideous, are therefore generally reputed grievous and shocking. He pronounceth *the day of one's death* to be *better than the day of his birth*, namely, the day of the death of one, who, having become the friend of God through faith, hath led a life to the honour of God, and service of his generation; and thereby raised himself the *good* and savoury *name better than precious ointment*, ver. 1. In like manner, he pronounceth *the house of mourning* to be preferable to *the house of feasting*, *sorrow* to *laughter*, and a *wise man's rebuke* to a *fool's song*; for that, howbeit the latter are indeed the more pleasant, yet the former are the more profitable, ver. 2—6. And observing with concern, how men are in hazard, not only from the world's frowns and ill usage, *oppression making a wise man mad*, but also from its smiles and caresses, *a gift destroying the heart*; therefore, since whatever way it goes, there is danger, he pronounceth the *end of every* worldly *thing better than the beginning thereof*, ver. 7, 8. And, from the whole, he justly infers, that it is better to be *humble* and *patient*, than *proud* and *impatient*, under afflicting dispensations; since, in the former case, one wisely submits to what is really best; in the latter,

he fights against it, ver. 8. And he dehorts from being *angry* with our lot, because of the adversity found therein, ver. 9. cautions against making odious comparisons of *former* and *present* times, in that point insinuating undue reflections on the providence of God, ver. 10. And, against that querulous and fretful disposition, he first prescribes a general remedy, namely, holy wisdom, as that which enables one to make the best of every thing, and even *giveth life* in killing circumstances, ver. 11, 12. And then a particular remedy, consisting in a due application of that wisdom towards the taking a just view of the case, *Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?*

In which words are proposed, (1.) The remedy itself, (2.) The suitableness thereof. *First*, The remedy itself is a wise eying the hand of God in all we find to bear hard upon us: *Consider the work* (or, *See thou the doing) of God*, to wit, in the *crooked*, rough, and disagreeable parts of thy lot, the crosses thou findest in it. Thou seest very well the cross itself; yea thou turnest it over and over in thy mind, and leisurely views it on all sides; thou lookest withal to this and the other second cause of it; and so thou art in a foam and fret: but, wouldst thou be quieted and satisfied in the matter, lift up thine eyes toward heaven, *see the doing of* God in it, the operation of his hand: look at that, and consider it well; eye the first cause of the crook in thy lot, behold how it is *the work of God*, his *doing*. *Secondly*, As for the suitableness of this remedy, that view of the crook in our lot is very suitable to still indecent risings of heart, and quiet us under it: *for who can* (that is, none can) *make that straight which God hath made crooked?* As to the crook in thy lot, God hath *made* it; and it must continue while he will have it so. Shouldst thou ply thine utmost force to even it, or *make it straight*, thine attempt will be vain: it will not alter for all thou canst do, only he who *made* it can mend it, or *make it straight*. This consideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means, at once to silence and satisfy men, and so to bring them unto a dutiful submission to their Maker and Governor, under the crook in their lot.

Now we take up the purpose of the text in these three *doctrines*. I. *Whatsoever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.* II. *What God sees meet to mar, one will not be able to mend in his lot.* III. *The considering of the crook in the lot, as the work of God, or of his making, is a proper means to bring one to a Christian deportment under it.*

DOCTRINE I. *Whatsoever crook is in one's lot, it is of God's making.*

Here two things fall to be considered, namely, *the crook* itself, and *God's making it.*

I. As to the crook itself, *the crook in the lot*, for the better understanding thereof, these few things following are premised. 1. There is a certain train or course of events, by the providence of God, falling to every one of us during our life in this world: and that is our lot, as being allotted to us by the sovereign God, our Creator and Governor, *in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways*. This train of events is widely different to different persons according to the will and pleasure of the sovereign Manager, who ordereth men's conditions in the world in a great variety, some moving in a higher, some in a lower sphere. 2. In that train or course of events, some fall out *cross* to us, and against the grain; and these make *the crook* in our lot. While we are here, there will be cross events, as well as agreeable ones, in our lot and condition. Sometimes things are softly and agreeably gliding on; but, by and by, there is some incident which alters that course, grates us, and pains us, as when, having made a wrong step, we begin to halt. 3. Every body's lot in this world hath some crook in it. Complainers are apt to make odious comparisons: they look about, and taking a distant view of the condition of others, can discern nothing in it but what is *straight*, and just to one's wish; so they pronounce their neighbour's lot wholly straight. But that is a false verdict: there is no perfection here, no lot out of heaven without a crook. For as to "all the works that are done under the sun, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight," Eccl. i. 14, 15. Who would have thought but Haman's lot was very straight, while his family was in a flourishing condition, and he prospering in riches and honour, being prime minister of state in the Persian court, and standing high in the king's favour? Yet there was, at the same time, a crook in his lot, which so galled him, that *all this availed him nothing*, Esth. v. 13. Every one feels for himself, where he is pinched, though others perceive it not. No body's lot in this world, is wholly crooked: there are always some straight and even parts in it. Indeed, when men's passions, having got up, have cast a mist over their minds, they are ready to say, *All* is wrong with them, *nothing* right: but though in hell that tale is, and ever will be true, yet it is never true in this world; for *there*, indeed, there is not a drop of comfort allowed, Luke xvi. 25. but here it always holds good, that *it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed*, Lam. iii. 22. *Lastly*, The crook in the lot came into the world by sin: it is owing to the fall, Rom. v. 12. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," under which *death* the crook in the lot is comprehended, as a state of *comfort* or *prosperity* is, in scripture-style, expressed by *living*, 1 Sam.

xxv. 6. John iv. 50, 51. Sin so bowed the hearts and minds of men, as they became crooked in respect of the holy law: and God justly so bowed their lot, as it became crooked too. And this crook in our lot inseparably follows our sinful condition, till dropping this body of sin and death, we get within heaven's gates.

These being premised, *a crook in the lot* speaks in the general, two things, (1.) *Adversity.* (2.) *Continuance.* Accordingly it makes *a day of adversity*, opposed to the *day of prosperity* in the verse immediately following the text.

The *crook* in the lot is, *First*, Some one or other piece of *adversity.* The prosperous part of one's lot, which goes forward according to one's wish, is the straight and even part of it: the adverse part going a contrary way, is the crooked part thereof. God hath intermixed these two in men's condition in this world; that, as there is some prosperity therein, making the straight line, so there is also some adversity making the crooked. The which mixture hath place, not only in the lot of saints, who are told, that *in the world you shall have tribulation*, but even in the lot of all, as already observed. *Secondly*, It is adversity of some *continuance.* We do not reckon it a *crooked* thing, which though forcibly bended and bowed together, yet presently recovers its former straightness. There are twinges of the rod of adversity, which passing like a stitch in one's side, all is immediately set to rights again: one's lot may be suddenly overclouded, and the cloud evanish ere he is aware. But under the *crook*, one having leisure to find his smart, is in some concern to get the crook evened. So the *crook in the lot* is adversity continued for a shorter or longer time.

Now there is a threefold *crook in the lot* incident to the children of men. (1.) One made by a cross dispensation, which, howsoever in itself passing, yet hath lasting effects. Such a crook did Herod's cruelty make in the lot of the mothers in Bethlehem, who by the murderers were left "weeping for their slain children, and would not be comforted, because they were not, Matth. ii. 18. A slip of the foot may soon be made, which will make a man go halting all along after. "As the fishes are taken in an evil net—so are the sons of men snared in an evil time," Eccles. ix. 12. The thing may fall out in a moment, under which the party shall go halting to the grave. (2.) There is a crook made by a *train* of cross dispensations, whether of the same or different kinds, following hard one upon another, and leaving lasting effects behind them. Thus, in the case of Job, *while* one messenger of evil tidings *was yet speaking, another came*, Job i. 16, 17, 18. Cross events coming one upon the neck of another, *deep calling unto deep*, make a sore crook. In that case the

party is like unto one, who, recovering his sliding foot from one unfirm piece of ground, sets it on another equally unfirm, which immediately gives way under him too: or, like unto one, who travelling in an unknown mountainous track, after having with difficulty made his way over one mountain, is expecting to see the plain country, but instead of this there comes in view, time after time, a new mountain to be passed. This crook in Asaph's lot, had like to have made him give up all his religion, *until he went into the sanctuary*, where this mystery of providence was unriddled to him, Psal. lxxiii. 13,—17. Solomon observes, that "there being just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked," Eccles. viii. 14. Providence taking a run against them, as if they were to be run down for good and all. Whoever they be whose life in no part thereof affords them experience of this, surely Joseph missed not of it in his young days, nor Jacob in his middle days, nor Peter in his old days, John xxi. 18. nor our Saviour in all his days. (3.) There is a crook made by one cross dispensation, with lasting effects thereof coming in the room of another removed. Thus one crook straightened, there is another made in its place: and so there is still a crook. Want of children had long been the crook in Rachel's lot, Gen. xxx. 1. That was at length evened to her mind: but then she got another in its stead, *hard labour* in travailing to bring forth, chap. xxxv. 16. This world is a wilderness, in which we may indeed get our station *changed:* but the remove will be out of one wilderness-station to another. When one part of the lot is evened, readily some other part thereof will be crooked.

More particularly, *the crook in the lot* hath in it four things of the nature of that which is *crooked.*

First, Disagreeableness. A crooked thing is wayward; and being laid to a rule answers it not, but declines from it. There is not in any body's lot, any such thing as a *crook* in respect of the will and purpose of God. Take the most harsh and dismal dispensation in one's lot, and lay it to the eternal decree, made in the depths of infinite wisdom, before the world began, and it will answer it exactly without the least deviation, *all things being wrought after the counsel of his will*, Eph. i. 11. Lay it to the providential will of God, in the government of the world, and there is a perfect harmony. If Paul is to be *bound* at Jerusalem, and *delivered into the hands of the Gentiles*, it is *the will of the Lord* it should be so, Acts xxi. 11, 14. Wherefore the greatest crook of the lot, on earth, is straight in heaven: there is no disagreeableness in it there. But in every body's lot there is a *crook* in respect of their *mind* and natural inclination. The adverse dispensation lies cross to that rule, and will by no

means answer it, nor harmonize with it. When divine Providence lays the one to the other, there is a manifest disagreeableness: the man's *will* goes one way, and the dispensation another way; the *will* bends upward, the cross events presseth down: so they are contrary. And there, and only there, lies the *crook*. It is this *disagreeableness* which makes the *crook in the lot* fit matter of exercise and trial to us, in this our state of probation: in the which, if thou wouldst approve thyself to God, walking by faith, not by sight, thou must quiet thyself in the will and purpose of God, and not insist that *it should be according to thy mind*, Job xxxiv. 23.

Secondly, Unsightliness. Crooked things are unpleasant to the eye: and no crook in the lot *seemeth to be joyous, but grievous*, making but an unsightly appearance, Heb. xii. 11. Therefore men need to beware of giving way to their thoughts to dwell on the crook in their lot, and of keeping it too much in view. David shews a hurtful experience in his, in that kind, Psal. xxxix. 3. "While I was musing, the fire burned." Jacob acted a wiser part, called his youngest son Benjamin, the son of the right-hand, whom the dying mother had named Ben-oni, the son of my sorrow; by this means providing, that the crook in his lot should not be set afresh in his view, on every occasion of mentioning the name of his son. Indeed a Christian may safely take a steady and leisurely view of the crook of his lot in the light of the holy word, which represents it as the discipline of the covenant. So faith will discover a hidden slightness in it under a very unsightly outward appearance; perceiving the suitableness thereof to the infinite goodness, love, and wisdom of God, and to the real and most valuable interest of the party; by which means one comes to *take pleasure*, and that a most refined pleasure *in distresses*, 2 Cor. xii. 10. But whatever the crook in the lot be to the eye of faith, it is not at all pleasant to the eye of sense.

Thirdly, Unfitness for motion. Solomon observes the cause of the uneasy and ungraceful walking of the lame, Prov. xxvi. 7. "The legs of the lame are not equal." This uneasiness they find who are exercised about the crook in their lot: a high spirit and a low adverse lot, makes great difficulty in the Christian walk. There is nothing that gives temptation more easy access, than the crook in the lot; nothing more apt to occasion out-of-the-way steps. Therefore saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 13. "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." They are to be pitied then who are labouring under it, and not to be rigidly censured; though they are rare persons who learn this lesson, till taught by their own experience. It is long since Job made an ob-

serve in this case, which holds good unto this day, Job xii. 5. "He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease."

Lastly, *Aptness to catch hold* and *entangle*, as with *fish hooks*, Amos iv. 2. The crook in the lot doth so very readily make impression, to the ruffling and fretting of one's spirit, irritating corruption, that Satan fails not to make diligent use of it to these dangerous purposes: the which point once gained by the tempter, the tempted, ere he is aware, finds himself intangled as in a thicket, out of which he knows not how to extricate himself. In that temptation it often proves like a crooked stick troubling a standing pool; the which not only raiseth up the mud all over, but brings up from the bottom some very ugly thing. Thus it brought up a spice of blasphemy and Atheism in Asaph's case, Psal. lxxiii. 13. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence." As if he had said, There is nothing at all in religion, it is a vain and empty thing that profiteth nothing; I was a fool to have been careful about purity and holiness, whether of heart or life. Ah! is this the pious Asaph! How is he turned so quite unlike himself! But the crook in the lot is a handle, whereby the tempter makes surprising discoveries of latent corruption, even in the best.

This is the *nature* of the crook in the lot. Let us now observe *what part of the lot it falls in.*

And, in the *general*, three conclusions may be established upon this head. *First*, It may fall in *any part* of the lot; there is no exempted one in the case: for sin being found in every part, the crook may take place in any part. Being *all as an unclean thing, we* may *all fade as a leaf*, Is. lxiv. 6. The main stream of sin, which the crook readily follows, runs in very different channels, in the case of different persons: and, in regard of the various dispositions of the minds of men, that will prove a sinking weight unto one, which another would go very lightly under. *Secondly*, It may at once fall in *many parts* of the lot, the *Lord* calling *as in a solemn day*, one's terrors round about, Lam. ii. 22. Sometimes God makes one notable crook in a man's lot: but its name may be *Gad*, being but the forerunner of *a troop* which *cometh*. Then the crooks are multiplied, so that the party is made to halt on each side. While one stream, let in from one quarter, is running full against him, another is let in on him from another quarter, till in the end the waters break in on every hand. *Thirdly*, It often falls in the *tender part*, I mean that part of the lot wherein one is least able to bear it, or, at least, thinks he is so, Psal. lv. 12, 13. "It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it—But it was thou, a

man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance." If there is any one part of the lot, which, of all other, one is disposed to nestle in, the thorn will readily be laid there, especially if he belongs to God: in that thing wherein he is least of all able to be touched, he will be sure to be pressed. There the trial will be taken of him; for *there* is the grand competition with Christ. "I take from them the desires of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds," Ezek. xxiv. 25. Since the crook in the lot is the special trial appointed for every one, it is altogether reasonable, and becoming the wisdom of God, that it fall on that which of all things doth most rival him.

But, more *particularly*, the *crook* may be observed to fall in these four parts of the lot.

First, In the *natural* part, affecting persons considered as of the make allotted for them by *the great God that formed all things*. The parents of mankind, Adam and Eve, were formed altogether sound and entire, without the least blemish, whether in soul or body; but, in the formation of their posterity, there often appears a notable variation from the original. Bodily defects, superfluities, deformities, infirmities, natural or accidental, make *the crook* in the lot of some: they have something unsightly or grievous about them. *Crooks* of this kind, more or less observable, are very common and ordinary, the best not exempted from them: and it is purely owing to sovereign pleasure they are not more numerous. *Tender eyes* made the crook in the lot of Leah, Gen. xxix. 17. Rachel's beauty was balanced with *barrenness*, the crook in her lot, chap. xxx. 1. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, was, it should seem, no personable man, but of a mean outward appearance, for which fools were apt to contemn him, 2 Cor. x. 10. Timothy was of a crazy frame, weakly and sickly, 1 Tim. v. 23. And there is a yet far more considerable crook in the lot of the *lame*, the *blind*, the *deaf* and *dumb*. Some are weak to a degree in their intellectuals; and it is the crook in the lot of several bright souls to be overcast with clouds, notably bemisted, and darkened from the crazy bodies they are lodged in: an eminent instance whereof we have in the grave, wise, and patient Job, *going mourning without the sun*, yea, *standing up and crying in the congregation*, Job xxx. 28.

Secondly, It may fall in the *honorary* part. There is an *honour* due to *all men*, the small as well as the great, 1 Pet. ii. 17. and that upon the ground of the original constitution of human nature, as it was framed *in the image of God*. But, in the sovereign disposal of holy providence, the crook in the lot of some falls here: they are neglected and slighted; their credit is still kept low; they go

through the world under a cloud, being put into an ill name, their reputation sunk. This sometimes is the native consequent of their own foolish and sinful conduct; as, in the case of Dinah, who, by her gadding abroad to satisfy her youthful curiosity, regardless of, and therefore not waiting for a providential call, brought a lasting stain on her honour, Gen. xxxiv. But where the Lord minds a crook of this kind in one's lot, innocence will not be able to ward it off in an ill-natured world: neither will true merit be able to make head against it, to make one's lot stand straight in that part. Thus David represents his case, Psal. xxxi. 11, 12, 13. "They that did see me without fled from me: I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many."

Thirdly, It may fall in the *vocational* part. Whatever is men's calling or station in the world, be it sacred or civil, the crook in their lot may take its place therein. Isaiah was an eminent prophet, but most unsuccessful, Is. liii. 1. Jeremiah met with such a train of discouragements and ill usage in the exercise of his sacred function, that he was well-near giving it up, saying, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name," Jer. xx. 9. The Psalmist observes this crook often to be made in the lot of some men very industrious in their civil business, who "sow the fields"—and at times "God blesseth them, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease:" but, "again, they are minished and brought low, through oppression, affliction and sorrow," Psal. cvii. 37—39. Such a *crook* was made in Job's lot, after it had long stood even. Some manage their employments with all care and diligence; the husbandman carefully labouring his ground; the sheep-master "diligent to know the state of his flocks, and looking well to his herds;" the tradesman early and late at his business; the merchant diligently plying his, watching and falling in with the most fair and promising opportunities; but there is such a *crook* in that part of their lot, as all they are able to do can by no means even. For why? The most proper means used for compassing an end are insignificant, without a word of divine appointment commanding their success: "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" Lam. iii. 37. People ply their business with skill and industry, but the wind turns in their face, providence crosseth their enterprizes, disconcerts their measures, frustrates their hopes and expectations, renders their endeavours successless, and so puts and keeps them still in straitening circumstances. "So the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise," Eccl. ix. 11. Providence interposing, *crooks* the

measures which human prudence and industry had laid straight towards the respective ends; so the swift lose the race, the strong the battle, and the wise miss of bread: while, in the mean time, some one or other providential incident, supplying the defect of human wisdom, conduct, and ability, the slow gain the race, and carry the prize; the weak win the battle and enrich themselves with the spoil; and bread falls into the lap of the fool.

Lastly, It may fall in the *rational* part. Relations are the joints of society; and there the crook in the lot may take place, one's smartest pain being often felt in these joints. They are in their nature the springs of man's comfort; yet they often run the greatest bitterness to him. Sometimes this crook is occasioned by the loss of relations. Thus a crook was made in the lot of Jacob, by means of the death of Rachel, his beloved wife, and the loss of Joseph, his son and darling, which had like to have made him go halting to the grave. Job laments this crook in his lot, Job xvi. 7. "Thou hast made desolate all my company;" meaning his dear children, every one of whom he had laid in the grave, not so much as one son or daughter left him. Again, sometimes it is made through the afflicting hand of God lying heavy on them; the which, in virtue of their relation, recoils on the party, as is feelingly expressed by that believing woman, Matth. xv. 22. "Have mercy on me, O Lord,—my daughter is grievously vexed." Ephraim felt the smart of a course of family affliction, when *he called his* son's *name* Beriah, *because it went evil with his house*, 1 Chron. vii. 23. Since *all is* not only *vanity* but *vexation of spirit*, it can hardly miss, but, the more of these springs of comfort are opened to a man, he must, at one time or other, find he has but the more sources of sorrow to gush out, and spring in upon him; the sorrow always proportioned to the comfort found in them, or expected from them. And, finally, the crook is sometimes made here by their proving uncomfortable through the disagreeableness of their temper, disposition, and way. There was a crook in Job's lot, by means of an undutiful, ill-natured wife, Job xix. 17. in Abigail's, by means of a surly, ill tempered husband, 1 Sam. xxv. 25. in Eli's, through the perverseness and obstinacy of his children, chap. ii. 25. in Jonathan's, through the furious temper of his father, chap. xx. 30, 33. So do men oftentimes find their greatest cross where they expected their greatest comfort. Sin hath unhinged the whole creation, and made every relation susceptible of the crook. In the family are found masters hard and unjust, servants froward and unfaithful; in neighbourhood, men selfish and uneasy; in the church, ministers unedifying, and offensive in their walk, and people contemptuous and disorderly, a burden to the

spirits of ministers; in the state, magistrates oppressive, and discountenancers of that which is good, and subjects turbulent and seditious: all these cause crooks in the lot of their relatives.

And thus far of the *crook* itself.

II. Having seen the *crook* itself, we are, in the next place, to consider of *God's making it.* And here is to be shown, (1.) *That* it is of God's making. (2.) *How* it is of his making. (3.) *Why* he makes it.

FIRST, That the crook in the lot, whatever it is, is of God's making, appears from these three considerations.

First, It cannot be questioned, but the crook in the lot, considered *as* the crook, is a penal evil, whatever it is for the *matter* thereof: that is, whether the thing in itself, its immediate cause and occasion be sinful or not, it is certainly a *punishment* or *affliction.* Now, as it may be, *as such* holily and justly brought on us, by our sovereign Lord and judge, so he expressly claims the *doing* or *making* of it, Amos iii. 6. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Wherefore, since there can be no penal evil, but of God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil, it is necessarily concluded to be of God's making.

Secondly, It is evident from the scripture-doctrine of *divine providence*, that God brings about every man's lot and all the parts thereof. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about whithersoever he listeth, "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places," Psal. cxxxv. 6. There is not any thing whatsoever befals us without his over-ruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb, bringeth us to, and fixeth us in, the condition and place allotted for us, by him who *hath determined the times and the bounds of our habitation*, Acts xvii. 26. It over-rules the smallest and most casual things about *us*, such as *hairs of our head falling on the ground*, Matth. x. 29, 30. *A lot cast into the lap*, Prov. xvi. 33. Yea, the free acts of our *will*, whereby we choose for ourselves, for, even "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water," Prov. xxi. 1. And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," Jer. x. 23. And this, whether these steps causing the crook to be deliberate and sinful ones, such as Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt; or whether they be undesigned, such as manslaughter purely casual, as *when one hewing wood* kills his neighbour with *the head of the axe slipping from the helve*, Deut. xix. 5. For there is a holy and wise providence that governs the sinful and the heedless actions of men,

as a rider doth a lame horse, of whose halting, not he, but the horse's own lameness, is the true and proper cause; wherefore, in the former of these cases, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, Gen. xlv. 7. and, in the latter, to *deliver one into his* neighbour's *hand*. Exod. xxi. 13.

Lastly, God hath, by an eternal decree, immoveable as *mountains of brass*, (Zech. vi. 1.) appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked parts thereof as well as the straight. By the same eternal decree, whereby the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and the valleys, were appointed, are the heights and depths, the prosperity and adversity in the lot of the inhabitants thereof, determined; and they are brought about, in time, in a perfect agreeableness thereto. The mystery of providence, in the government of the world, is, in all the parts thereof, the building reared up of God, in exact conformity to the plan in his decree, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. So that there is never a crook in one's lot, but may be run up to this original. Hereof Job piously sets us an example, in his own case, Job xxiii. 13, 14. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performed the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him."

SECONDLY, That we may see *how* the crook in the lot is of God's making, we must distinguish between pure sinless crooks, and impure sinful ones.

First, There are pure and sinless crooks: the which are mere afflictions, cleanly crosses; grievous indeed, but not defiling. Such were Lazarus's poverty, Rachel's barrenness, Leah's tender eyes, the blindness of the man who had been so from his birth, John ix. 1. Now the crooks of this kind, are of God's making by the efficacy of his power directly bringing them to pass, and causing them to be. He is the *maker* of the poor, Prov. xvii. 5. "Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker;" that is, reproacheth God who *made* him *poor*, according to that, 1 Sam. ii. 7. "The Lord maketh poor." It is he that hath the key of the womb, and, as he sees meet, *shuts* it, (1 Sam. i. 5.) or *opens* it, Gen. xxxix. 31. And it is *he that formed the eye*, Psal. xciv. 9. And the man was *born blind, that the works of God should be made manifest in him*, John ix. 3. Therefore he saith to Moses, Exod. iv. 11. "Who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?" Such crooks in the lot are of God's making, in the most ample sense, and in their full comprehension, being the direct effects of his agency, as well as the heavens and the earth are.

Secondly, There are impure sinful crooks, which, in their own na-

ture, are sins as well as afflictions, defiling as well as grievous. Such was the crook made in David's lot, through his family disorders, the defiling of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the rebellion of Absalom, all of them unnatural. Of the same kind was that made in Job's lot, by the Sabeans and Chaldeans taking away his substance, and slaying his servants. As these were the afflictions of David and Job, respectively, so they were the sins of the actors, the unhappy instruments thereof. Thus one and the same thing may be, to one a heinous sin, defiling and laying him under guilt: and to another an affliction, laying him under suffering only. Now, the crooks of this kind are not of God's making, in the same latitude as those of the former; for he neither puts evil in the hearts of any, nor stirreth up to it; "He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempeth he any man, Jam. i. 13. But they are of his making, by his holy *permission* of them, powerful *bounding* of them, and wise *over-ruling* of them to some good end.

First, He holily *permits* them, *suffering* men *to walk in their own ways*, Acts xiv. 16. Though he is not the author of these sinful crooks, causing them to be by the efficacy of his power; yet, if he did not permit them, *willing* not to hinder them, they could not be at all; for *he shutteth, and no man openeth*, Rev. iii. 7. But he justly with-holds his grace, which the sinner does not desire, takes off the restraint under which he is uneasy, and, since the sinner *will* be gone, lays the reigns on his neck, and leaves him to the swing of his lust. Hos. iv. 17. "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. "Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts." In which unhappy situation, the sinful crook doth, from the sinner's own proper motion, natively and infallibly follow: even as water runs down a hill, wherever there is a gap left open before it. So, in these circumstances, "Israel walked in their own counsels," ver. 12. And thus this kind of crook is of God's making, as a just Judge, punishing the sufferer by it. The which view of the matter silenced David under Shimei's cursings, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. "Let him alone, and let him curse: for the Lord hath bidden him."

Secondly, He powerfully *bounds* them, Psal. lxxvi. 10. "The remainder of wrath" (namely, the creature's wrath) "thou shalt restrain." Did not God bound these crooks, howsoever sore they are in any one's case, they would yet be sorer: but he says to the sinful instrument, as he said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." He lays a restraining band on him, that he cannot go one step farther, in the way his impetuous lust drives, than he sees meet to permit. Hence

it comes to pass, that the crook of this kind is neither more nor less, but just as great as he by his powerful bounding makes it to be. An eminent instance thereof, we have in the case of Job, whose lot was crooked through a peculiar agency of the devil: but, even to the grand sinner, God set a bound in the case. "The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand," Job i. 12. Now *Satan* went the full length of the bound, leaving nothing within the compass thereof untouched, which he saw could make for his purpose, ver. 18, 19. But he could by no means move one step beyond it, to carry his point which he could not gain within it. And therefore to make the trial greater, and crook sorer, nothing remained, but that the bound set should be removed, and the sphere of his agency enlarged; for which cause he saith, "But touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." chap. ii. 5. And it being removed accordingly, but withal a new one set, ver. 6. "Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life;" the crook was carried to the utmost that the new bound would permit, in a consistency with his design of bringing Job to blaspheme; "Satan smote him with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown, ver. 7. And had it not been for this bound, securing Job's life, he, after finding this attempt successless too, had doubtless dispatched him for good and all.

Thirdly, He wisely *over-rules* them to some good purpose becoming the divine perfections. While the sinful instrument hath an ill design in the crook caused by him, God directs it to a holy and good end. In the disorders of David's family, Amnon's design was to gratify a brutish lust, Absalom's to glut himself with revenge, and to satisfy his pride and ambition: but God meant thereby to punish David for his sin in the matter of Uriah. In the crook made in Job's lot, by Satan and the Sabeans and Chaldeans his instruments, Satan's design was to cause Job blaspheme, and theirs to gratify their covetousness: but God had another design therein, becoming himself, namely, to manifest Job's sincerity and uprightness. Did not he wisely and powerfully over-rule these crooks made in men's lot, no good could come out of them: but he always over-rules them so, as to fulfil his own holy purposes thereby, *howbeit* the sinner *meaneth not so*; for his designs cannot miscarry, *his counsel shall stand*, Isa. xlvi. 10. So the sinful crook is, by the over-ruling hand of God, turned about to his own glory, and his people's good, in the end; according to the word, Prov. xvi. 4. "The Lord hath made all things for himself." Rom. viii. 28. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Thus Haman's plot, for the destruction of the Jews, *was turned to the contrary*, Esth. ix. 1. And the

crook made in Joseph's lot, by his own brethren selling him into Egypt, though it was on their part most sinful, and of a most mischievous design; yet, as it was of God's making, by his holy permission, powerful bounding, and wise over-ruling of it, had an issue well becoming the divine wisdom and goodness: both which Joseph noticeth to them, Gen. l. 20. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

THIRDLY, It remains to enquire, *why God* makes a crook in one's lot. And this is to be cleared by discovering the *design* of that dispensation: a matter which it concerns every one to know, and carefully to notice, in order to a Christian improvement of the crook in their lot. The *design* thereof seems to be, chiefly, seven-fold.

First, The *trial* of one's *state*, Whether one is in the state of grace, or not? Whether a sincere Christian, or a hypocrite? Though every affliction is trying, yet here, I conceive, lies the main providential trial a man is brought upon with reference to his *state:* forasmuch as the crook in the lot, being a matter of a continued course, one has occasion to open and shew himself again and again in the same thing; whence it comes to pass, that it ministers ground for a decision, in that momentous point. It was plainly on this bottom that the trial of Job's state was put. The question was, Whether Job was an *upright* and sincere *servant of God*, as God himself testified of him; or, but a *mercenary* one, a hypocrite, as Satan alleged against him? And the trial hereof was put upon the *crook* to be made in his lot, Job i. 8—12. and ii. 3—6. Accordingly that which all his friends, save Elihu the last speaker, did, in their reasonings with him under his trial, aim at, was to prove him a hypocrite; Satan thus making use of these good men for gaining his point. As God took trial of Israel in the wilderness, for the land of Canaan, by a train of afflicting dispensations, the which Caleb and Joshua bearing strenuously were declared meet to enter the promised land, as having *followed the Lord fully;* while others being tired out with them, their carcases fell in the wilderness: so he takes trial of men, for heaven, by the crook in their lot. If one can stand that test, he is manifested to be a saint, a sincere servant of God, as Job was proven to be: if not, he is but a hypocrite; he cannot stand the test of the crook in his lot, but goes away like dross in God's furnace. A melancholy instance of which we have in that man of honour and wealth, who, with high pretences of religion, arising from a principle of moral seriousness, addressed himself to our Saviour, to know "what he should do that he might inherit eternal life," Mark x. 17, 21. Our Saviour, to discover the man to himself, makes a

crook in his lot, where all along before it had stood even, obliging him, by a probatory command, to sell and give away all he had, and follow him, verse 21. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor—and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Hereby he was, that moment, in the court of conscience, stript of his *great possessions;* so that thenceforth he could no longer keep them, with a good conscience, as he might have done before. The man instantly felt the smart of this crook made in his lot, "he was sad at that saying," verse 22. that is, immediately upon the hearing of it, being struck with pain, disorder, and confusion of mind, his countenance changed, became cloudy and *lowring*, as the same word is used, Matth. xvi. 3. He could not stand the test of that crook; he could by no means submit his lot to God in *that* point, but behoved to have it, at any rate, *according to his own mind.* So he "went away grieved, for he had great possessions." He went away from Christ back to his plentiful estate, and though with a pained and sorrowful heart, sat him down again on it, a *violent possessor* before the Lord, thwarting the divine order. And there is no appearance that ever this order was revoked, nor that ever he came to a better temper in reference thereunto.

Secondly, Excitation to *duty*, weaning one from this world, and prompting him to look after the happiness of the other world. Many have been beholden to the crook in their lot, for that ever they came to themselves, settled and turned serious. Going for a time, like *a wild ass used to the wilderness*, scorning to be turned, their foot hath slid in due time; and a crook being thereby made in their lot, their *month* hath come, wherein they have been caught, Jer. ii. 24. Thus was the prodigal *brought to himself*, and obliged to entertain thoughts of returning unto his Father, Luke xv. 17. The crook in their lot convinces them at length, that here is not their rest. Finding still a pricking thorn of uneasiness, whensoever they lay down their head, where they would fainest take rest in the creature, and that they are obliged to lift it again, they are brought to conclude, *there is no hope* from that quarter, and begin to cast about for rest another way. So it makes them errands to God, which they had not before; for as much as they feel a need of the comforts of the other world, to which their mouths were out of taste, while their lot stood even to their mind. Wherefore whatever use we make of the crook in our lot, the voice of it is, "Arise ye, and depart, this is not your rest." And it is surely that, which of all means of mortification of the afflictive kind, doth most deaden a real Christian to this life and world.

Thirdly, Conviction of sin. As when one, walking heedlessly, is

suddenly taken ill of a lameness; his going halting the rest of his way convinceth him of having made a wrong step; and every new painful step brings it afresh to his mind: so God makes a crook in one's lot, to convince him of some false step he hath made, or course he hath taken. What the sinner would otherwise be apt to overlook, forget, or think light of, is by this means, recalled to mind, set before him as an evil and bitter thing, and kept in remembrance, that his heart may every now and then bleed for it afresh. Thus, by the crook, men's *sin finds them out* to their conviction, *as the thief is ashamed when he is found*, Numb. xxxii. 23. Jer. ii. 26. The which Joseph's brethren do feelingly express, under the crook made in their lot in Egypt, Gen. xlii. 21. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," chap. xliv. 16. "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." The crook in the lot doth usually, in its nature or circumstances, so natively refer to the false step or course, that it serves for a providential *memorial* of it, bringing the sin, though of an old date, fresh to remembrance, and for a *badge* of the sinner's folly, in word or deed, to keep it ever before him. When Jacob found Leah, through Laban's unfair dealing, palmed upon him for Rachel, how could he miss of a stinging remembrance of the cheat he had seven years at least before put on his own father, pretending himself to be Esau? Gen. xxvii. 19. How could it miss of galling him occasionally afterwards during the course of the marriage? He had imposed on his father the younger brother for the elder: and Laban imposed on him the elder sister for the younger. The dimness of Isaac's eyes favoured the former cheat: and the darkness of the *evening* did as much favour the latter. So he behoved to say, as Adonibezek in another case, Judg. i. 7. "As I have done, so God hath requited me." In like manner, Rachel dying in child-birth, could hardly evite a melancholy reflection on her rash and passionate expression, mentioned Gen. xxx. 1. "Give me children, or else I die." Even holy Job read, in the crook of his lot, some false steps he had made in his youth many years before, Job. xiii. 26. "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth."

Fourthly, *Correction* or *punishment* for sin. In nothing more than in the crook of the lot is that word verified, Jer. ii. 19. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee." God may for a time wink at one's sin, which afterward he will set a brand of his indignation upon in crooking the sinner's lot, as he did in the case of Jacob, and of Rachel, mentioned before. Though the sin was a passing action, or a course of no long continuance, the mark of the divine displeasure for it, set on the sinner in the crook of his lot, may pain him long

and sore, that by repeated experience he may know what an evil and bitter thing it was. David's killing Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites was soon over: but for that cause *the sword never departed from his house*, 2 Sam. xii. 10. Gehazi quickly obtained two bags of money from Naaman, in the way of falsehood and lying: but, as a lasting mark of the divine indignation against the profane trick, he got withal a *leprosy* which clave to him while he lived, and to his posterity after him, 2 Kings v. 27. This may be the case, as well where the sin is pardoned, as to the guilt of eternal wrath, as where it is not. And one may have confessed and sincerely repented of that sin, which yet shall make him go halting to the grave, though it cannot carry him to hell. A man's person may be *accepted in the beloved*, who yet hath a particular badge of the divine displeasure with his sin hung upon him in the crook of his lot, Psal. xcix. 8. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions."

Fifthly, *Preventing of sin*, Hos. ii. 6. "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths." The crook in the lot will readily be found to lie cross to some wrong bias of the heart, which peculiarly sways with the party: so it is like a thorn-hedge or wall in the way which that bias inclines him to. The defiling objects in the world do specially take, and prove ensnaring, as they are suited to the particular cast of temper in men: but, by means of the crook in the lot, the paint and varnish is worn off the defiling object, whereby it loseth its former taking appearance: so the fuel being removed, the edge of corrupt affections is blunted, temptation weakened, and much sin prevented; the sinner after *gadding about so much to change his way*, returning *ashamed*, Jer. ii. 36, 37. Thus the Lord crooks one's lot, "That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man;" and so, "he keepeth back his soul from the pit," Job xxxiii. 17, 18. Every one knows what is most pleasing to him, but God alone knows what is the most profitable. As *all men are liars*, so all men are fools too: he is the *only wise God*, Jude, 25. Many are obliged to the crook in their lot, that they go not to these excesses, which their vain minds and corrupt affections would with full sail carry them to: and they would from their hearts bless God for making it, if they did but calmly consider what would most likely be the issue of the removal thereof. When one is in hazard of fretting under the hardship of bearing the crook, he would do well to consider what condition he is as yet in, for to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

Sixthly, *Discovery of latent corruption*, whether in saints or sinners. There are some corruptions in every man's heart, which lie, as it

were, so near the surface, that they are ready on every turn to cast up: but then there are others also which lie so very deep, that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under the pot makes the scum to cast up, appear a-top and run over, so the crook in the lot ariseth up from the bottom, and brings out such corruption as otherwise one would hardly imagine to be within. Who would have suspected such strength of passion in the meek Moses, as he discovered *at the waters of strife*, and for which he was kept out of Canaan? Psal. cvi. 32, 33. Numb. xx. 13. So much bitterness of spirit in the patient Job, as to charge God with *becoming cruel* to him? Job xxx. 21. So much ill-nature in the good Jeremiah, as to *curse* not only the *day of his birth*, but even *the man who brought tidings of it to his father?* Jer. xx. 14, 15. Or, such a tang of Atheism in Asaph, as to pronounce religion a *vain* thing? Psal. lxxiii. 13. But the crook in the lot, bringing out these things, shewed them to have been within, how long soever they had lurked unobserved. And as this design, however indecently proud scoffers allow themselves to treat it, is in nowise inconsistent with the divine perfections; so the discovery itself is necessary for the due humiliation of sinners, and to *stain the pride of all glory*, that men may know themselves. Both which appear, in that it was on this very design that God made the long continued crook in Israel's lot in the wilderness; even to *humble* them *and prove* them, *to know what was in* their *heart*, Deut. viii. 2.

Lastly, The *exercise of grace* in the children of God. Believers, through the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to fits of spiritual laziness and inactivity, in which their graces lie dormant for the time. Besides, there are some graces, which, of their own nature, are but occasional to their exercise; as being exercised only upon occasions of certain things which they have a necessary relation to; such as patience and long-suffering. Now, the crook in the lot serves to rouse up a Christian to the exercise of the graces overpowered by corruption, and withal to call forth to action the occasional graces ministering proper occasions for them. The truth is, the crook in the lot is the great engine of providence for making men appear in their true colours, discovering both their ill and their good: and if the grace of God be in them, it will bring it out, and cause it to display itself. It so puts the Christian to his shifts, that, however it makes him stagger for a while, yet it will at length evidence both the reality and the strength of grace in him. "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth—may be found unto praise," 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. The crook in the lot

gives rise unto many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other graces; to many heavenly breathings, pantings, longings, and groanings, which otherwise would not be brought forth. And I make no question but these things, howsoever by carnal men despised as trifling, are more precious in the sight of God, than even believers themselves are aware of, being acts of immediate internal worship; and will have a surprising notice taken of them, and of the sum of them, at long-run, howbeit the persons themselves can hardly think them worth their own notice at all. We know who hath said to the gracious soul, "Let me see thy countenance—thy countenance is comely," Cant. ii. 14. "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes," chap. iv. 9. The steady acting of a gallant army of horse and foot to the routing of the enemy, is highly prized; but the acting of holy *fear* and humble *hope*, is in reality far more valuable, as being so in the sight of God, whose *judgment, we are sure, is according to truth.* This the Psalmist teacheth, Psal. cxvii. 11, 12. "He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." And indeed the exercise of the graces of his Spirit in his people, is so very precious in his sight, that whatever grace any of them do excel in, they will readily get such a crook made in their lot, as will be a special trial for it, that will make a proof of its full strength. Abraham excelled in the grace of faith, in trusting God's bare word of promise, over the belly of sense: and God giving him a promise, that *he would make of him a great nation*, made withal a crook in his lot, by which he had enough ado with all the strength of his faith; while he was obliged for good and all to leave his country and his kindred, and sojourn among the Canaanites; his wife continuing barren, till past the age of child-bearing; and when she had at length brought forth Isaac, and he was grown *up*, he was called to offer him up for a burnt-offering, the more exquisite trial of his faith, that Ishmael was now expelled his family, and that it was declared, That *in Isaac* only *his seed should be called*, Gen. xxi. 12. "Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," Numb. xii. 3. And he was intrusted with the conduct of a most perverse and unmanageable people, the crook in his lot plainly designed for the exercise of his *meekness*. Job excelled in patience, and, by the crook in his lot, he got as much to do with it. For God gives none of his people to excel in a gift, but some one time or other, he will afford them use for the whole compass of it.

Now the *use* of this doctrine is threefold. (1.) For *reproof*. (2.) For *consolation*. And, (3.) For *exhortation*.

Use 1. Of *reproof*. And it meets with three sorts of persons as reproveable.

First, The *carnal* and *earthly*, who do not with awe and reverence regard the crook in their lot as of God's *making*. There is certainly a signature of the divine hand upon it to be perceived by just observers: and that challengeth an awful regard, the neglect of which forbodes destruction, Psal. xxviii. 5. "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, thou shalt destroy them, and not build them up." And herein they are deeply guilty, who poring upon second causes, and looking no farther than the unhappy *instruments* of the crook in their lot, overlook the first cause; as a dog snarles at the stone, but looks not to the hand that cast it. This is, in effect, to make a god of the creature; so regarding *it*, as if it could of itself effectuate any thing, while, in the mean time, it is but an *instrument* in the hand of God, the *rod of his anger*, Is. x. 5. *ordained of him for judgment, established for correction*, Hab. i. 12. O! why should men terminate their view on the *instruments* of the crook in their lot, and so magnify their scourges! The truth is, they are, for the most part, rather to be *pitied*, as having an undesirable office, which, for their gratifying their own corrupt affections, in making the crook in the lot of others, returns on their own head at length with a vengeance, as did *the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu*, Hos. i. 4. And it is specially undesirable to be so employed in the case of such as belong to God; for rarely is the ground of the quarrel the same on the part of the instrument, as on God's part, but very different; witness Shimei's cursing David, as *a bloody man*, meaning the blood *of the house of Saul*, which he was *not* guilty of, while God meant it of the blood of Uriah, which he could not deny, 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8. Moreover, the quarrel will be, at long-run, taken up between God and his people; and then their scourges will find they had but a thankless office, Zech. i. 15. "I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction," saith God, in resentment of the Heathens crooking the lot of his people. In like manner are they guilty who impute the crook in their lot to *fortune*, or their *ill luck*, which in very deed is nothing but a creature of imagination, framed for a blind to keep men from acknowledging the hand of God. Thus, what the Philistines doubted, they do most impiously determine, saying, in effect, "It is not his hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened us," 1 Sam. vi. 9. And, finally, these also, who, in the way of giving up themselves to carnal mirth and sensuality, set themselves to despise the crook in their lot, to make nothing of it, and to forget it. I question not, but one committing his case to the Lord, and looking

to him for remedy in the first place, may lawfully call in the moderate use of the comforts of life for help in the second place. But as for *that* course, so frequent and usual in this case among carnal men, if the crook of the lot really be, as indeed it is, of God's making, it must needs be a most indecent unbecoming course, to be abhorred of all good men, Prov. iii. 11. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord. "It is surely a very desperate method of cure, which cannot miss of issuing in something worse than the disease, however it may palliate it for a while, Is. xxii. 12—14. "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning —and behold, joy and gladness—eating flesh, and drinking wine.—And it was revealed in mine ears, by the Lord of hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die."

Secondly, The *unsubmissive*, whose hearts, like the troubled sea, swell and boil, fret and murmur, and cannot be at rest under the crook in their lot. This is a most sinful and dangerous course. The apostle Jude, characterising some *to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*, verse 13. saith of them, verse 16. *These are murmurers, complainers*, namely, still complaining of their lot, which is the import of the word there used by the Holy Ghost. For, since the crook in their lot, which their unsubdued spirits can by no means submit to, is of God's *making*, this their practice must needs be a fighting against God, and these their complainings and murmurings are indeed against *him*, whatever face they put upon them. Thus, when the *Israelites murmured against Moses*, Numb. xiv. 2. God charges them with murmuring against himself; "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me?" verse 7. Ah! may not he, who made and fashioned us without our advice, be allowed to make our lot too without asking our mind, but we must rise up against him on account of the crook made in it! What doth this speak, but that the proud creature cannot endure God's work, nor digest what *he* hath done? And how black and dangerous is that temper of spirit? how is it possible to miss of being broken to pieces in such a course? "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Job ix. 4.

Lastly, The *careless* and *unfruitful*, who do not set themselves dutifully to comply with the design of the crook in their lot. God and nature do nothing in vain. Since *he* makes the crook, there is, doubtless, a becoming design in it, which we are obliged in duty to fall in with, according to that, Mic. vi. 9. "Hear ye the rod." And indeed, if one shut not his own eyes, but be willing to understand, he may easily perceive the general design thereof to be, to wean

him from this world, and move him to seek and take up his *heart's rest* in God. And the nature and circumstances of the crook itself being duly considered, it will not be very hard to make a more particular discovery of the design thereof. But, alas! the careless sinner, sunk in spiritual sloth and stupidity, is in no concern to discover the design of providence in the crook: so he cannot fall in with it, but remains unfruitful; and all the pains taken on him, by the great Husbandman, in the dispensation, are lost. "They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty," groaning under the pressure of the crook itself, and weight of the hand of the instrument thereof: "but none saith, Where is God my Maker?" they look not, they turn not to God for all that, Job xxxv. 9, 10.

Use II. Of *consolation*. It speaks comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever is the crook in your lot, it is of God's making: and therefore you may look upon it kindly. Since it is your *Father* has made it for you, question not but there is a favourable design in it towards you. A discreet child welcometh his father's rod, knowing that being a father, he seeks his benefit thereby: and shall not God's children welcome the crook in their lot, as designed by their Father, who cannot mistake his measures to work for their *good*, according to the promise? The truth is, the crook in the lot of a believer, how painful soever it proves, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured by the promise of the Father to Christ's children, Psal. lxxxix. 30, 32. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments—then will I visit their transgression with the rod." Farthermore, all who are disposed to betake themselves to God, under the crook in their lot, may take comfort in this. Let them know, that there is no crook in their lot, but may be made straight: for God made it, surely then he can mend it. He himself can *make straight* what he hath *made crooked*, though none other can. There is nothing too hard for him to do. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill: that he may set him with princes. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children," Psal. cxiii. 7—9. Say not that your crook hath been of so long continuance, that it will never mend. Put it in the hand of God, who made it, that he may mend it, and wait on him: and if it be so for thy good, that it should be mended, it shall be mended; for "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

Use last, Of *exhortation*. Since the crook in my lot is of God's making, then, eyeing the hand of God in yours, be reconciled to it, and *submit* under it, whatever it is. I say, *eyeing the hand of God in*

it: for otherwise your submission, under the crook in your lot, cannot be a *Christian* submission, acceptable to God, having no reference to *him* as your party in the matter.

OBJECT. I. But some will say, *The crook in my lot is from the hand of the creature; and such an one too as I deserved no such treatment from.* ANSW. From what hath been already said, it appears, that although the crook in thy lot be *immediately* from the creature's hand, yet it is mediately from the hand of God; there being nothing of that kind, no penal evil, but *the Lord hath done it.* Therefore, without all peradventure, God himself is thy principal party, whoever be the less principal. And albeit thou hast not deserved thy crook at the hand of the instrument or instruments which he makes use of for thy correction, thou certainly deservest it at *his* hand, and he may make use of what instrument he will in the matter, or may do it immediately by himself, even as seems good in his sight.

OBJECT. 2. *But the crook in my lot might quickly be evened, if the instrument or instruments thereof pleased; only there is no dealing with them, so as to convince them of their fault in making it.* ANSW. If it is so, be sure God's time is not as yet come that that crook should be evened: for if it were come, though they stand now like an impregnable fort, they would give way like a sandy bank under one's feet; they should "bow down to thee with their face tōward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet," Is. xlix. 23. Mean while, that state of the matter is so far from justifying one's not eyeing the hand of God in the crook in the lot, that it makes a piece of trial, in which his hand very eminently appears; namely, that men should be signally injurious and burdensome to others, yet by no means susceptible of conviction. This was the trial of the church from her adversaries, Jer. l. 7. "All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice." They were very abusive, and gave her barbarous usage; yet would they take with no fault in the matter. How could they ward off the conviction? Were they verily blameless in their devouring the Lord's straying sheep? No, sure they were not. Did they look upon themselves as ministers of the divine justice against her? No, they did not. Some indeed would make a question here, how the adversaries of the church could celebrate her God as the *habitation of justice?* But the original pointing of the text being retained, it appears that there is no ground at all for this question here, and withal the whole matter is set in a clear light. "All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not: because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of

justice." These last are not the words of the adversaries, but the words of the prophet, shewing how it came to pass that the adversaries devoured the Lord's sheep, as they lighted on them, and withal stood to the defence of it, when they had done, far from acknowledging any wrong: the matter lay here, the sheep had sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, and, as a just punishment hereof from *his* hand, they could have no justice at the hand of their adversaries.

Wherefore, laying aside these frivolous pretences, and eyeing the hand of God, as that which hath bowed your lot in that part, and keeps it in the bow, be reconciled to, and submit under the crook, whatever it is, saying from the heart, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it," Jer. x. 19.

And, to move you hereunto, consider, (1.) It is a duty you owe to God, as your sovereign Lord and Benefactor. His *sovereignty* challengeth our submission; and it can in no case be meanness of spirit to submit unto the crook which *his* hand hath made in our lot, and to go quietly under the yoke that *he* hath laid on: but it is really madness for the potsherds of the earth, by their turbulent and refractory carriage under it, to strive with their Maker. And his *beneficence* to us, ill-deserving creatures, may well stop our mouths from complaining of *his* making a crook in our lot, who had done us no wrong had he made the whole of it crooked. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job ii. 10. (2.) It is an unalterable statute, for the time of this life, that nobody shall want a crook in their lot; for "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," Job v. 7. And those who are designed for heaven, are in a special manner assured of a crook in theirs, that *in the world* they *shall have tribulation*, John xvi. 33. for by means thereof the Lord makes them meet for heaven. And how can you imagine that you shall be exempted from the common lot of mankind? "Shall the rock be removed out of his place for thee?" And since God makes the crooks in men's lot, according to the different exigence of their cases, you may be sure that yours is necessary for you. (3.) A crook in the lot, which one can by no means submit to, makes a condition of all things the likest to that in hell. For there a yoke, which the wretched sufferers can neither bear nor yet shake off, is wreathed about their necks: there the almighty arm draws against them, and they against it: there they are ever suffering and ever sinning; still in the furnace, but their dross not consumed, nor they purified. Even such is the case of those who now cannot submit under the crook in their lot. *Lastly*, Great is the loss by not submitting under it. The crook in the lot,

rightly improven, hath turned to the best account, and made the best time to some that ever they had all their life long, as the Psalmist from his own experience testifies, Psal. cxix. 67. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." There are many now in heaven, who are blessing God for the crook they had in their lot here. What a sad thing must it then be to lose this teeth-wind for Immanuel's land? But if the crook in thy lot do thee no good, be sure it will not miss of doing thee great damage; it will hugely increase guilt, and aggravate thy condemnation, while it shall for ever cut thee to the heart, to think of the pains taken on thee, by means of the crook in the lot, to wean thee from the world, and bring thee to God, but all in vain. Take heed, therefore, how you manage it, "Lest thou mourn at the last, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?" Prov. v. 10, 11, 12.

DOCT. II. *What God sees meet to mar, we will not be able to mend in our lot. What crook God makes in our lot, we will not be able to even.*

We shall, 1*st*, Shew God's marring and making a crook in one's lot, as he sees meet.

2*dly*, We shall consider men's attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot.

3*dly*, In what sense it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot.

4*thly*, Render some reasons of the point.

I. As to the first head, namely, *&c.*

1. God keeps the choice of every one's crook to himself: and therein he exerts his sovereignty, Matt. xx. 15. It is not left to our option what that crook shall be, or what our peculiar burden: but, as the potter makes of the same clay one vessel for one use, another for another use: so God makes one crook for one, another for another, according to his will and pleasure, Psal. cxxxv. 6. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth," *&c.*

2. He sees and observes the bias of every one's will and inclination how it lies, and wherein it specially bends away from himself, and consequently wherein it needs the special bow; so he did it in that man's case, Mark x. 21. "One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor," *&c.* Observe the bent of his heart to his great possessions. He takes notice what is that idol that in every one's case is most apt to be his rival, that so he may suit the trial to the case, making the crook there.

3. By the conduct of his providence, or a touch of his hand, he gives that part of one's lot a bow the contrary way; so that henceforth it lies quite contrary to that bias of the party's will, Ezek. xxiv. 25. And here the trial is made, the bent of the will lying one way, and that part of one's lot another, that it does not answer the inclination of the party, but thwarts with it.

Lastly, He wills that crook in the lot to remain while he sees meet, for longer or shorter time, just according to his own holy ends he designs it for, 2 Sam. xii. 10. Hos. v. 15. By that will it is so fixed, that the whole creation cannot alter it, or put it out of the bow.

II. We shall consider men's attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot. This, in a word, lies in their making efforts to bring their lot in that point to their own will, that they may both go one way; so it imports three things.

First, A certain uneasiness under the crook in the lot; it is a yoke which is hard for the party to bear, till his spirit be tamed and subdued, Jer. xxxi. 18. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned," *&c.* And it is for the breaking down of the weight of one's spirit that God lays it on; for which cause it is declared to be a good thing to bear it, Lam. iii. 27. that being the way to make one at length as a weaned child.

Secondly, A strong desire to have the cross removed, and to have matters in that part going according to our inclinations. This is very natural, nature desiring to be freed from every thing that is burdensome or cross to it: and if that desire be kept in a due subordination to the will of God, and be not too peremptory, it is not sinful Matt. xxvi. 39. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will," *&c.* Hence so many accepted prayers of the people of God, for the removal of the crook in their lot.

Lastly, An earnest use of means for that end. This natively follows on that desire. The man, being pressed with the cross which is his crook, labours all he can in the use of means to be rid of it. And if the means used be lawful, and not relied upon, but followed with an eye to God in them, the attempt is not sinful either, whether he succeed in the use of them or not.

III. In what sense it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot?

Negatively, It is not to be understood, as if the case were absolutely hopeless, and that there is no remedy for the crook in the lot. For there is no case so desperate but God may right it, Gen. xviii. 14. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" When the crook was con-

tinued long, and spurned all remedies one has used for it, one is ready to lose hope about it; but many a crook, given over for hopeless that would never mend, God has made perfectly straight, as in Job's case. But,

Positively, We will never be able to mend it by ourselves; if the Lord himself take it not in hand to remove it, it will stand before us immoveable, like a mountain of brass, though perhaps it may be in itself a thing that might easily be removed. We take it up in these three things.

1. It will never do by the mere force of our hand, 1 Sam. ii. 9.—"For by strength shall no man prevail." The most vigorous endeavours we can use will not even the crook, if God give it not a touch of his hand; so that all endeavours that way, without an eye to God, are vain and fruitless, and will be but plowing on the rock, Psal. cxxvii. 1, 2.

2. The use of all allowable means, for it will be successless unless the Lord bless them for that end, Lam. iii. 37. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" As one may eat and not be satisfied, so one may use means proper for evening the crook in his lot, and yet prevail nothing; for nothing can be or do for us any more than God makes it to be or do, Eccl. ix. 11.—"The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding," *&c.*

3. It will never do in our time, but in God's time, which seldom is so early as ours, John vii. 6.—"My time is not yet come; but your time "is always ready." Hence that crook remains sometimes immoveable, as if it were kept by an invisible hand; and at another time it goes away with a touch, because God's time is come for evening it.

IV. Reasons of the point.

1*st*, Because of the absolute dependence we have upon God, Acts xvii. 28. As the light depends on the sun, or the shadow on the body, so we depend on God, and without him can do nothing, great or small. And God will have us to find it so, to teach us our dependence.

2*dly*, Because his will is irresistable, Is. xlvi. 10.—"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." When God wills one thing, and the creature the contrary, it is easy to see which will must be done. When the omnipotent arm holds, in vain does the creature draw, Job ix. 4.—"Who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered?"

Inference 1. There is a necessity of yielding and submitting under

the crook in our lot; for we may as well think to remove the rocks and mountains, which God has settled, as to make that part of our lot *straight which he hath crooked.*

2. The evening of the crook in our lot, by main force of our own, is but a cheat we put on ourselves, and will not last, but, like a stick by main force made straight, it will quickly return to the bow again.

Lastly, The only effectual way of getting the crook evened, is to apply to God for it.

Exhortation 1. Let us then apply to God for removing any crook in our lot, that in the settled order of things may be removed. Men cannot cease to desire the removal of a crook, more than that of a thorn in the flesh: but, since we are not able to mend what God sees meet to mar, it is evident we are to apply to him that made it to amend it, and not take the evening of it in our own hand.

Motive 1. All our attempts for its removal will, without him, be vain and fruitless, Psal. cxxvii. 1. Let us be as resolute as we will to have it evened, if God say it not, we will labour in vain, Lam. iii. 37. However fair the means we use bid for it, they will be ineffectual if he command not a blessing, Eccl. ix. 11.

2. Such attempts will readily make it worse. Nothing is more ordinary, than for a proud spirit, striving with the crook, to make it more crooked, Eccl. x. 8, 9.—"Whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him." Ver. 9. "Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith," *&c.* This is evident in the case of the murmurers in the wilderness. It natively comes to be so; because, at that rate, the will of the party bends farther away from it: and moreover, God is provoked to wreathe the yoke the faster about one's neck, that he will by no means let it sit easy on him.

3. There is no crook but what may be remedied by him, and made perfectly straight, Psal. cxlvi. 8.—"The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down," *&c.* He can raise the oldest sit-fast, concerning which there remains no hopes with us, Rom. iv. 17.—"Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were." It is his prerogative to do wonders: to begin a work, where the whole creation gives it over as hopeless, and carry it on to perfection, Gen. xviii. 14.

4. He loves to be employed in evening crooks, and calls us to employ him that way, Psal. i. 15.—"Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee." *&c.* He makes them for that very end, that he may bring us to him on that errand, and may manifest his power and goodness in evening of them, Hos. v. 15. The straits of the children of men afford a large field for displaying his glorious perfections, which otherwise would be wanting, Exod. xv. 11.

A crook thus evened is a double mercy. There are some crooks evened by a touch of the hand of common providence, while people are either not exercised about them, or when they fret for their removal: these are sapless mercies, and short-lived, Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31. Hos. xiii. 11. Fruits thus hastily plucked off the tree of providence can hardly miss to set the teeth on edge, and will certainly be bitter to gracious souls. But, O the sweet of the evening of the crook got by a humble application to, and waiting on the Lord! It has the image and superscription of divine favour upon it, which makes it bulky and valuable, Gen. xxxiii. 10.—"For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God," *&c.* chap. xxi. 6.

6. God has signalized his favour to his dearest children, in making and mending notable crooks in their lot. His darling ones ordinarily have the greatest crooks made in their lot. Heb. xii. 6. But then they make way for the richest experience in the removal of them, upon their application to him. This is clear from the case of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. Which of the patriarchs had so great crooks as they? But which of them, on the other hand, had so signal tokens of divine favour? The greatest of men, as Samson and the Baptist, have been born of women naturally barren: so do the greatest crooks issue in the richest mercies to them that are exercised thereby.

Lastly, It is the shortest and surest way to go straight to God with the crook in the lot. If we would have our wish in that point, we must, as the eagle, first soar aloft, and then come down on the prey, Mark v. 36. Our faithless out-of-the-way attempts to even the crook, are our fool's haste, that is no speed; as in the case of Abraham's going into Hagar. God is the first mover, who sets all the wheels in motion for evening the crook, the which without him will remain immoveable, Hos. ii. 21, 22.

OBJECT. (1.) *But it is needless, for I see, that though the crook in my lot may mend, yet it will never mend. In its own nature it is capable of being removed, but it is plain, it is not to be removed, it is hopeless.* ANSW. That is the language of unbelieving haste, which faith and patience should correct, Psal. cxvi. 11, 12. Abraham had as much to say for the hopelessness of his crook, but yet he applies to God in faith for the mending of it, Rom. iv. 19, 20. Sarah had made such a conclusion, for which she was rebuked, Gen. xviii. 13, 14. Nothing can make it needless in such a case to apply to God.

OBJECT. (2.) *But I have applied to him again and again for it, yet it is never mended.* ANSW. Delays are not denials of suits at the court of heaven, but trials of the faith and patience of the petitioners.

And whoso will hang on, will certainly come speed at long-run, Luke xviii. 7, 8, 31. "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" Ver. 8. "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." Sometimes indeed folk grow pettish, in the case of the crook in the lot, and let it drop out of their prayers, in a course of despondency, while yet it continues uneasy to them: but, if God mind to even it in mercy, he will oblige them to take it in again into them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.—"I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," &c. If the removal come, while it is dropt, there will be little foyson in it; though it were never to be removed while we live, that should not cut off our applying to God for the removal; for there are many prayers not to be answered till we come to the other world, and there all will be answered at once, Rom. vii. 24.

DIRECTIONS *for right managing the application for removing the crook in the lot.*

1. Pray for it, Ezek. xxxvi. 37; and pray in faith, believing that for the sake of Jesus, you shall certainly obtain at length, and in this life too, if it is good for you; but without peradventure in the other life, Matth. xxi. 22. They will not be disappointed that get the song of Moses and of the Lamb, Rev. xv. 3. And in some cases of that nature, extraordinary prayer, with fasting, is very expedient, Matth. xvii. 21.

2. Humble yourselves under it, as the yoke which the sovereign hand has laid on you, Mic. vii. 9. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him," &c. Justify God, condemn yourselves, kiss the rod, and go quietly under it: this is the most feasible way to get rid of it, James iv. 10. When the bullock is broken and tamed, as accustomed to the yoke, then it is taken off, the end being obtained, Psal. x. 17.—"Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."

Lastly, Wait on patiently, till the hand that made it mend it, Psal. xxvii. 14. Do not give up the matter as hopeless, because you are not so soon relieved as you would; "but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," James i. 4. Leave the timing of the deliverance to the Lord; his time will at length to conviction appear the best, and it will not go beyond it, Isa. lx. 22.—"I the Lord will hasten it in his time;" waiting on him, you will not be disappointed,—"For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me," Isa. xlix. 23.

Exhortation 2. What crook there is, that, in the settled order of things, cannot be got removed or evened in this world, let us apply

to God for suitable relief under it. For instance, the common crook in the lot of the saints, *viz.* indwelling sin; as God has made that crook not to be removed here, he can certainly balance it, and afford relief under it. The same is to be said of any crook, while it remains unremoved. In both cases apply yourself to God, for making up your losses another way. And there are five things I would have you to keep in view, and aim at here.

1. To take God in Christ, for and instead of that thing, the withholding or taking away of which from you makes the crook in your lot, Psal. cxlii. 4, 5. There is never a crook God makes in our lot, but it is in effect Heaven's offer of a blessed exchange to us, such as, Mark x. 21.—"Sell whatsoever thou hast,—and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." In managing of which exchange, God first puts out his hand, and takes away some earthly thing from us; and it is expected we put out our hand next, and take some heavenly thing from him in the stead of it, and particularly his Christ. Wherefore has God emptied his left hand of such and such an earthly comfort? Stretch out your right hand to a God in Christ, take him in the room of it, and welcome. Therefore the soul's closing with Christ is called buying, wherein, parting with one thing, we get another in its stead, Matth. xiii. 45, 46.—"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls:" ver. 46. "Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Do this, and you will be more than even hands with the crook in your lot.

2. Look for the stream's running as full from him as ever it did or could run, when the crook of the lot has dried it. This is the work of faith, confidently to hang on for that from God which is denied us from the creature. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Psal. xxvii. 10. This is a most rational expectation: for it is certain there is no good in the creature but what is from God; therefore there is no good to be found in the creature, the stream, but what may be got immediately from God, the Fountain. And O but it is a welcome plea, to come to God, and say, Now Lord, thou hast taken away from me such a creature-comfort, I must have as good from thyself.

3. The spiritual fruits of the crook in the lot, Heb. xii. 11. We see the way in the world is, when one trade fails, to fall on and drive another trade; so should we, when there is a crook in the lot, making our earthly comforts low, set ourselves the more for spiritual attainments. If our trade with the world sinks, let us see to drive a trade with heaven more vigorously: see if, by means of the crook, we can reach more faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, con-

tempt of the world, humility, self-denial, &c. 2 Cor. vi. 10. So, while we lose at one hand, we will gain at another.

4. Grace to carry us under the crook, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice." Ver. 9. "And he said, My grace is sufficient for thee." Whether a man be faint and have a light burden, or be refreshed and strengthened and have a heavy one, it is all a case, the latter can go as easy under his burden, as the former under his. Grace proportioned to the trial is what we should aim at; getting that, though the crook be not evened, we are even hands with it.

Lastly, The keeping in our eye the eternal rest and weight of glory in the other world, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. "For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." This will balance the crook in your lot, be it what it will; while they, who have no well-grounded hope of salvation, will find the crook in their lot in this world such a weight, as they have nothing to counterbalance it; yet the hope of eternal rest may bear up under all the toil and labour met with here.

Exhortation 3. Let us then set ourselves rightly to bear and carry under the crook in our lot, while God sees meet to continue it. What we cannot mend, let us bear christianly, and not fight against God, and so kick against the pricks. So let us bear it,

1. Patiently, without firing and fretting, or murmuring, James v. 7. Psal. xxxvii. 7. Though we lose our comfort in the creature, through the crook in our lot, let us not lose the possession of ourselves, Luke xxi. 19. The crook in our lot makes us like one who has but a scanty coldrife fire to warm at; but impatience under it scatters it, so as to set the house on fire about us, that exposeth us, Prov. xxv. 28. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

2. With Christian fortitude, without sinking under discouragement—"nor faint when thou art rebuked of him," Heb. xii. 5. Satan's work is, by the crook, either to bend or break people's spirits, and oft-times by bending to break them: our work is to carry evenly under it, steering a middle course, guarding against splitting on the rocks on either hand. Our happiness lies not in any earthly comfort, nor will the want of any of them render us miserable, Hab. iii. 17, 18. So that we are resolutely to hold on our way, with a holy contempt and regardlessness of the hardships, Job xvii. 9. "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

Quest. When is one to be reckoned to fall under sinking discouragement from the crook in his lot? *Ans.* When it prevails so far as to unfit for the duties either of our particular or Christian calling. We may be sure it has carried us beyond the bounds of moderate grief, when it unfits us for the common affairs of life, which the Lord calls us to manage, 1 Cor. vii. 24. It is recorded to the commendation of Abraham, Gen. xxiii. 3, 4. Or for the duties of religion hindering them altogether, 1 Pet. iii. 7.—"that your prayers be not hindered," *cut off*, or *up, like a tree from the roots*, or making one quite hopeless in them, Mal. ii. 13.

Lastly, Profitably, so as we may gain some advantage thereby, Psal. cxix. 71. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes." There is advantage to be made thereby, Rom. v. 3—5. and it is certainly an ill managed crook in our lot, when we get not some spiritual good of it, Heb. xii. 11. The crook is a kind of spiritual medicine; and as it is lost physic that purges away no ill humours, but in vain are its unpleasantness to the taste, and its gripings endured; so it is a lost crook, and ill is the bitterness of it wared, that we are not bettered by, Is. xxvii. 9. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."

Motives to press this exhortation. Consider,

1. There will be no evening of it while God sees meet to continue it. Let us carry under it as we will, and make what sallies we please in the case, it will continue immoveable, as fixed with bands of iron and brass, Job xxiii. 13, 14. "But he is of one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth." Verse 14. "For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him." Is it not wisdom then to make the best we may of what we cannot mend? Make a virtue then of necessity. What is not to be cured must be endured, and should with Christian resignation.

2. An awkward carriage under it notably increases the pain of it. What makes the yoke gall our necks, but that we struggle so much against it, and cannot let it sit at ease on us, Jer. xxxi. 18. How often are we in that case, like men dashing their heads against a rock to remove it! The rock stands unmoved, but they are wounded, and lose exceedingly by their struggle. Impatience under the crook lays an overweight on the burden, and makes it heavier, while withal it weakens us, and makes us less able to bear.

3. The crook in thy lot is the special trial God has chosen for thee to take thy measure by, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. It is God's fire, whereby he tries what metal men are of; heaven's touch-stone for discover-

ing of true and counterfeit Christians. They may bear, and go through several trials, whom the crook in the lot will discover to be naught, because by no means they can bear that, Mark x. 21, 22. Think then with thyself under it. Now, here the trial of my state turns; I must, by this be proven either sincere or a hypocrite. For, (1.) Can any be a cordial subject of Christ, without being able to submit his lot to him? Do not all who sincerely come to Christ, put a blank in his hand? Acts ix. 6. Psal. xlvii. 4. And does he not tell us, that without that disposition we are not his disciples? Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Perhaps you find you can submit to any thing but that: but will that *but* mar all? Mark v. 21. Did ever any hear of a sincere closing with Christ, with a reserve or exception of one thing, wherein they behoved to be their own lords?

Quest. Is that disposition then a qualification necessarily prerequired to our believing? And if so, where must we have it? Can we work it out of our natural powers? *Ans.* No, it is not so; but it necessarily accompanies and goes along with believing, flowing from the same saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ, whereby the soul is brought to believe on him. Hereby the soul sees him an able Saviour, so trusts on him for salvation; the rightful Lord, and infinitely wise Ruler, and so submits the lot to him, Matth. xiii. 45, 46. The soul, taking him for a Saviour, takes him also for a Head and Ruler. It is Christ's giving himself to us, and our receiving him, that causes us to quit other things to and for him; as it is the light dispels the darkness. *Case.* Alas! I cannot get my heart freely to submit my lot to him in that point. *Ans.* That submission will not be carried on in any without a struggle; the old man will never submit it, and when the new man of grace is submitting it, the old man will still be reclaiming, Gal. v. 17. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." But are ye sincerely desirous, and habitually aiming to submit it? Do ye, from the ungracious struggle against the crook, turn away to the struggle with your own heart to bring it to submit, believing the promise, and using the means for it, being grieved from the heart with yourselves that ye cannot submit? This is submitting your lot, in the favourable construction of the gospel, Rom. vii. 17—20. 2 Cor. viii. 12. If ye had your choice, would ye rather have your heart brought to submit to the crook evened to your heart's desire? Rom. vii. 22, 23. And do ye

not sincerely endeavour to submit it in spite of the reluctancy of flesh? Gal. v. 17.

2. Where is the Christian self-denial and taking up of the cross, without submitting to the crook? This is the first lesson Christ puts in the hands of his disciples, Matth. xvi. 24. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Self-denial would procure a reconciliation with the crook, and an admittance of the cross: but while we cannot bear our corrupt self to be denied any of its cravings, and particularly that which God sees meet especially to be denied it, we cannot bear the crook in our lot, but fight against it in favour of self.

3. Where is our conformity to Christ, while we cannot submit to the crook? We cannot evidence ourselves Christians without conformity to Christ. "He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked," 1 John ii. 6. There was a continued crook in Christ's lot, but he submitted to it, Philip. ii. 8. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Rom. xv. 3. "For even Christ pleased not himself," &c. And so must we, if we will prove ourselves Christians indeed, Matth. xi. 29. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

4. How will we prove ourselves the genuine kindly children of God, if still warring with the crook? We cannot pray, "Our Father,—Thy will be done on earth, as," &c. Matth. vi. Nay the language of that practice is, We must have our own will, and God's will not satisfy us.

Motive 4. The trial by the crook here will not last long, 1 Cor. vii. 31. What though the work be sore, it may be the better comported with, that it will not be longsome: a few days or years at farthest will put an end to it, and take you off your trials. Do not say, I will never be eased of it; for if you be not eased of it before, ye will be eased of it at death, come in the room of it after what will. A serious view of death and eternity might make us to set ourselves to carry rightly under our crook while it lasteth.

5. If ye would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook, ye would find it easier than ye imagine, Matth. xi. 29, 30. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me—and ye shall find rest to your souls." Verse 30. "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Satan has no readier way to gain his purpose, than to persuade men it is impossible that ever their minds should yield to the crook; that it is a burden to them altogether insupportable: as long as ye believe that, be sure ye will never be able to bear it. But the Lord makes no crook in the lot of any, but what may be so

borne of them acceptably, though not sinlessly and perfectly, Matth. xi. 30. For there is strength for that effect secured in the covenant, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Philip. iv. 13. and being by faith fetched it, it will certainly come, Psal. xxviii. 7.

6. If ye carry christianly under your crook here, ye will not lose your labour, but get a full reward of grace in the other world, through Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 58. There is a blessing, on this very ground, pronounced on him that endureth, James i. 12. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Heaven is the place into which those approven, upon the trial of the crook, are received, Rev. vii. 14.—"These are they which come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." When ye come there, no vestiges of it will be remaining in your lot, nor will ye have the least uneasy remembrance of it; but it will accent your praises, and heighten your joy.

7. If ye do not carry christianly under it, ye will lose your souls in the other world, Jude, 15, 16. Those who are at war with God in their lot here, God will have war with them for ever. If they will not submit to his yoke here, and go quietly under it, he will wreathe his yoke about their neck for ever, with everlasting bonds that shall never be loosed, Job ix. 4.

Lastly, Whatever crook is in the lot of any, it is very likely there is a public crook abiding the generation, that will be more trying. This is a day of sinning beyond the days of our fathers, a day wherein God is making great crooks in the lot of the dearest to himself: but these seem to presage such a general public crook to be abiding the generation, as will make our now private ones of very little weight, 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Therefore set yourselves to carry rightly under the crook in your lot.

If ye ask what way one may reach that, for direction we propose,

DOCTRINE *last. Considering the crook in the lot, as the work of God, is a proper means to bring one to carry rightly under it.*

I. What it is to consider the crook as the work of God, we take it up in these five things.

1*st*, An enquiry into the spring whence it riseth, Gen. xxv. 22. Reason and religion both teach us, not only to notice the crook, which we cannot avoid, but to consider and enquire into the spring of it. Surely it is not our choice, nor do we designedly make it for ourselves: and to ascribe it to fortune, is to ascribe it to nothing;

it is not sprung of itself, but sown by one hand or other for us, Job v. 6. And we are to notice the hand whence it comes.

2*dly*, A perceiving of the hand of God in it. Whatever hand any creature hath therein, we ought not to terminate our view in them, but look above and beyond them to the supreme Manager's agency therein, Job i. 21. Without this we make a God of the creature instrumental of the crook, looking on it as if it were the first cause, which is peculiar to God, Rom. xi. 36. and bring ourselves under that doom, Psal. xxviii. 5. "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up."

3*dly*, A representing it to ourselves as the work of God, which he hath wrought against us for holy and wise ends, becoming the divine perfections. This is to take it by the right handle, to represent it to ourselves under a right notion, from whence a right management under it may spring. It can never be safe to overlook God in it, but very safe to overlook the creature, ascribing it unto God, as if no other hand were in it, his being always the principal therein.—"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good," 1 Sam. iii. 18. Thus David overlooked Shimei, and looked to God in the matter of his cursing, as one would the axe, fixing his eye on him that wielded it. Here two things are to come into our consideration.

1. The decree of God purposing that crook for us from eternity. —"For he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. the sealed book in which are written all the black lines that make the crook. Whatever valley of darkness, grief, and sorrow, we are carried through, we are to look on them as made by the mountains of brass, the immoveable divine purposes, Zech. vi. 1. This can be no presumption in that case, if we carry it no farther than the event goes in our sight and feeling: for so far the book is opened for us to look into.

2. The providence of God bringing to pass that crook for us in time, Amos iii. 6. There is nothing can befal us without him in whom we live. Whatever kind of agency of the creatures may be in the making of our crook, whatever they have done or not done towards it, he is the spring that sets all the created wheels in motion, which ceasing they would all stop; though he is still infinitely pure in his agency, however impure they be in theirs. Job considered both these, Job xxiii. 14.

4*thly*, A continuing of the thought of it as such. It is not a simple glance of the eye, but a contemplating and leisurely viewing of it as his work, that is the proper mean. We are to be,

(1.) Habitually impressed with this consideration; as the crook

is some lasting grievance, so the consideration of this as the remedy should be habitually kept up. There are other considerations besides this, that we must entertain, so that we cannot always have it expressly in our mind: but we must lay it down for a rooted principle, according to which we are to manage the crook, and keep the heart in a disposition, whereby it may slip into our minds, as occasion requires, expressly.

(2.) Occasionally exercised in it. Whenever we begin to feel the smart of the crook, we should fetch in this remedy: when the yoke begins to gall the neck, there should be an application of this spiritual ointment. And however often the former comes in on us, it will be our wisdom to fetch in the latter as the proper remedy: the oftener it is used, it will more easily come to hand, and also be the more effectual.

Lastly, A considering it for the end for which it is proposed to us, *viz.* to bring to a dutiful carriage under it. Men's corruption will cause them to enter on this consideration: and as is the principle, so will the end and effect of it be *corrupt*, 2 Kings vi. 33. But we must enter on, and use it for a good end, if we would have good of it, taking it as a practical consideration for regulating our conduct under the crook.

II. How is it to be understood to be a proper means to bring one to carry rightly under the crook.

1. *Negatively*, Not as if it were sufficient of itself, and as it stands alone, to produce that effect. But, 2. *Positively*, As it is used in faith, in the faith of the gospel: that is to say, a sinner's bare considering the crook in his lot as the work of God, without any saving relation to him, will never be a way to carry rightly under it: but having believed in Jesus Christ, and so taking God for his God, the considering of the crook as the work of God, his God, is the proper means to bring him to that desirable temper and behaviour. Many hearers mistake here. When they hear such and such law-considerations proposed for bringing them to duty, they presently imagine, that, by the mere force of them, they may gain the point. And many preachers too, who, forgetting Christ and the gospel, pretend, by the force of reason, to make men Christians: the eyes of both being held, that they do not see the corruption of men's nature, which is such as sets the true cure above the force of reason; all that they are sensible of being some ill habits, which they think may be shaken off by a vigorous application of their rational faculties. To clear this matter, consider,

First, Is it rational to think to set fallen man, with his corrupted nature, to work the same way with innocent Adam? That is to set

beggars on a level with the rich, lame men on a journey with them that have limbs. Innocent Adam had a stock of gracious abilities, whereby he might have, by the force of moral considerations, brought himself to perform duty aright. But where is that with us? 2 Cor. iii. 5. Whatever force be in them to a soul endued with spiritual life, what force is in them to raise the dead, such as we are? Eph. ii. 1.

Secondly, The scripture is very plain on this head, shewing the indispensable necessity of faith, Heb. xi. and that such as unites to Christ, John xv. 5. "Without me," *i. e.* separate from me, "ye can do nothing;" no not with all the moral considerations ye can use. How were the ten commandments given on mount Sinai? Not bare exactions of duty, but fronted with the gospel, to be believed in the first place; "I am the Lord thy God," &c. And so Solomon, whom many do regard rather as a moral philosopher, than an inspired writer leading to Christ, fronts his writings, in the beginning of the Proverbs, with most express gospel. And must we have it expressly repeated in our Bibles with every moral precept, or else shut our eyes, and take these precepts without it? This is the effect of our natural enmity to Christ. If we loved him more, we would see him more in every page, and in every command, receiving the law at his mouth.

Thirdly, Do but consider what it is to carry rightly under the crook in the lot; what humiliation of soul, self-denial, and absolute resignation to the will of God, must be in it; what love to God it must proceed from; how regard to his glory must influence it as the chief end thereof; and try and see, if it is not impossible for you to reach it without that faith aforementioned. I know a Christian may reach it without full assurance: but still, according to the measure of their persuasion that God is their God, so will their attainments in it be; these keep equal pace. O what kind of hearts do they imagine themselves to have, that think they can for a moment empty them of the creature, farther than they can fill them with a God, as their God, in its room and stead! No doubt men may, from the force of moral considerations, work themselves to a behaviour under the crook, externally right, such as many Pagans had; but a Christian disposition of spirit under it will never be reached without that faith in God.

OBJECTION. *Then it is saints only that are capable of the improvement of that consideration.* ANSW. Yea, indeed it is so, as to that and all other moral considerations, for true Christian ends; and that amounts to no more, than that directions for walking rightly are only for the living, that have the use of their limbs: and therefore that we may improve it, set yourselves to *believe* in the first place.

III. I shall confirm that it is a proper mean to bring one to carry rightly under it. This will appear, if ye consider these four things.

1. It is of great use to divert from the considering and dwelling on these things about the *crook*, which serve to irritate our corruption. Such are the frustrating of our wills and wishes; the satisfaction we would have in matters going according to our mind; the instruments of the crook, how injurious they are to us, how unreasonable, how obstinate, *&c.* The dwelling on these considerations is but the blowing of the fire within; but to turn our eyes to it as the work of God, would be a cure by way of diversion, 2 Sam. vi. 9, 10; and such diversion of the thoughts is not only lawful, but expedient and necessary.

2. It has a moral aptitude for producing the good effect. Though our cure is not compassed by the mere force of reason; yet it is carried on, not by a brutal movement, but in a rational way, Eph. v. 14. This consideration has a moral efficacy on our reason, is fit to awe us into submission, and ministers much argument for it, moving to carry christianly under our crook.

3. It hath a divine appointment for that end, which is to be believed, Prov. iii. 6. so the text. The creature in itself is an inefficacious and moveless thing, a mere vanity, Acts xvii. 28. What makes any thing a means fit for an end, without the faith of this, is to make a god of the creature; therefore it is to be used in a dependence on God, according to that word of appointment, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. And every thing is fit for the end for which God has appointed it. This consideration is appointed for that end; and therefore is a fit means for it.

Lastly, The Spirit may be expected to work by it, and does work by it in them that believe, and look to him for it, forasmach as it is a mean of his own appointment. Papists, Legalists, and all superstitious persons, devise various means of sanctification, seeming to have, or really having a moral fitness for the same: but they are quite ineffectual, because, like Abana and Pharpar, they want a word of divine appointment for curing us of our leprosy: therefore the Spirit works not by them, since they are none of his own tools, but devised of their hearts. And since the means of divine appointment are ineffectual without the Spirit, these can never be effectual. But this consideration having a divine appointment, the Spirit works by it.

Use. Then take this direction for your carrying right under the crook in your lot. Inure yourselves to consider it as the work of God. And for helping you to improve it, so as it may be effectual, I offer these advices.

1. Consider it as the work of your God in Christ. This is the way to sprinkle it with gospel-grace, and so to make it tolerable, Psal. xxii. 1, 2, 3. The discerning of a Father's hand in the crook will take out much of the bitterness of it, and sugar the pill to you. For this cause it will be necessary, (1.) Solemnly to take God for your God under your crook, Psal. cxlii. 4, 5. (2.) In all your encounters with it, resolutely to believe and claim your interest in him, 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

2. Enlarge the consideration with a view of the divine relations to you, and the divine attributes. Consider it, being the work of your God, the work of your Father, elder Brother, Head, Husband, &c. who therefore surely consults your good. Consider his holiness and justice, shewing he wrongs you not; his mercy and goodness, that it is not worse; his sovereignty, that may silence you; his infinite wisdom and love, that may satisfy you in it.

3. Consider what a work of his it is; how it is a convincing work, for bringing sin to remembrance; a correcting work, to chastize you for your follies; a preventing work, to hedge you up from courses of sin ye would otherwise be apt to run into; a trying work, to discover your state, your graces and corruptions; a weaning work, to wean you from the world, and fit you for heaven.

Lastly, In all your considerations of it in this manner, look upward for the Spirit to render them effectual, 1 Cor. iii. 6. Thus may ye carry christianly under it till God even it either here or in heaven.

PROVERBS xvi. 19.

Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

COULD men once be brought to believe, that it is better to have their minds brought to ply with the crook in their lot, than to force even the crook to their mind, they would then be in a fair way to bring their matters in that case to a good account. Here then the divine decision in that case, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." In which words,

First, There is a comparison instituted, and that between two parties, and two points wherein they vastly differ.

1*st*. The parties are the *lowly* and the *proud*, who differ like heaven and the centre of the earth; the *proud* are ay climbing up, and

soaring aloft; the *lowly* are content to creep on the ground, if that is the will of God: let us view them more particularly as the text represents them.

(1.) On the one hand is the *lowly*. Here there is a line reading, and a marginal, both from the Holy Spirit, and they differ only in a letter. The former is the afflicted or poor, that are low in their condition; those that have a notable crook in their lot through affliction laid on them, whereby their condition is lowered in the world. The other is the lowly or meek humble ones, who are low in their spirit as well as their condition, and so have their mind brought down to their lot. Both together make the character of this lowly party.

(2.) On the other hand is the *proud*, the gay and high-minded ones. It is supposed here, that they are crossed too, and have crooks in their lot; for dividing the spoil is the consequent of a victory, and a victory presupposes a battle.

2*d*. The points wherein these parties are supposed to differ, *viz.* being of a *humble spirit*, and *dividing the spoil*.

Afflicted and lowly ones may sometimes get their condition changed, may be raised up on high, and divide the spoil, as Hannah, Job, &c. The proud may be sometimes thrown down and crushed, as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, &c. But that is not the question; whether it is better to be raised up with the *lowly*, or thrown down with the *proud*. There would be no difficulty in determining that. But the question is, whether it is better to be of a low and humble spirit, in low circumstances, with afflicted humble ones, or to divide the spoil, and get one's will, with the proud? If men would speak the native sentiments of their hearts, that question would be determined in a contradiction to the text. The points then here compared, and set one against the other, are these,

(1.) On the one hand, to be of a *humble spirit* with afflicted *lowly* ones. Hebrew, *to be of low spirit;* for the word primarily denotes lowness in situation or state. So the point here proposed is to be with or in the state of afflicted lowly ones, having the spirit brought down to that low lot, the lowness of the spirit, balancing the lowness of one's condition.

(2.) On the other hand, to *divide the spoil with the proud*. The point here proposed is, to be with or in the state of the proud, having their lot by main force brought to their mind; as those who, taking themselves to be injured, fight it out with the enemy, overcome and divide the spoil according to their will.

2. The decision made, wherein the former is preferred to the latter, *Better it is, &c.* If these two parties were set before us, it were

better to take our lot with those of a low condition, who have their spirits brought as low as their lot, than with those who, being of a proud and high-bent spirit, have their lot brought up to their mind. A humbled spirit is better than a heightened condition.

DOCTRINE, *There is a generation of lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit lowered and brought down to their lot, whose case, in that respect, is better than that of the proud getting their will, and carrying all to their mind.*

I. We shall consider the generation of the lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit brought down to their lot. And we shall,

1*st*. Lay down some general considerations about them.

1. There is such a generation in the world, for as bad as the world is. The text expressly mentions them, and the scripture elsewhere makes mention of them, as Psal. ix. 12. and x. 12. Matth. v. 3. with Luke vi. 20. Where shall we seek them? Not in heaven, there are no afflicted ones there: not in hell, there are no lowly or humble ones there, whose spirit is brought to their lot. In this world they must then be, where the state of trial is.

2. If it were not so, Christ, as he was in the world, would have no followers in it. He was the Head of that generation whom they all copy after.—"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart," Matth. xi. 29. And for his honour, and the honour of his cross, they will never be wanting while the world stands, Rom. viii. 29.—"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." His image lies in these two, *suffering* and *holiness*, whereof *lowliness* is a chief part.

3. Nevertheless they are certainly very rare in the world. Agur observes, there is another generation, (Prov. xxx. 13. "Their eyes are lofty, and their eye-lids lifted up,") quite opposite to them; and this makes the greatest company by far. The low and afflicted lot is not so very rare, but the lowly disposition of spirit is rarely yoked with it. Many a high-bent spirit keeps on the bend in spite of lowering circumstances.

4. They can be no more in number than the truly godly; for nothing less than the power of divine grace can bring down men's minds from their native height, and make their will pliant to the will of God, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Men may put on a face of submission to a low and crossed lot, because they cannot help it, and they see it is in vain to strive: but to bring the spirit truly to it, must be the effect of humbling grace.

5. Though all the godly are of that generation, yet there are some of them to whom that character more especially belongs. The

way to heaven lies through tribulation to all, Acts xiv. 22; and all Christ's followers are reconciled to it notwithstanding, Luke xiv. 26; yet there are some of them more remarkably disciplined than others, whose spirit however is thereby humbled, and brought down to their lot Psal. cxxxi. 2. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." Phil. iv. 11, 12.—"For I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Lastly, A lowly disposition of soul, and habitual aim and bent of the heart that way, has a very favourable construction put upon it in heaven. Should we look for a generation perfectly purged of pride and risings of heart against their adverse lot at any time, we would find none in this world: but those who are sincerely aiming and endeavouring to reach it, and keep the way of contented submission, though sometimes they are blown aside, returning to it again, God accounts to be that lowly generation, 2 Cor viii. 12. James v. 11.

II. We shall enter into the particulars of their character. There are three things which together make up their character.

First, Affliction in their lot. That lowly generation, preferred to the proud and prosperous, are a generation of afflicted ones, whom God keeps under the discipline of the covenant. We may take it up in these two.

1. There is a yoke of affliction, of one kind or other, oftentimes upon them, Psal. lxxiii. 14. If there be silence in heaven, it is but for half an hour, Rev. viii. 1. God is frequently visiting them, as a master doth his scholars, and a physician his patients; whereas others are in a sort overlooked by him, Rev. iii. 19. They are accustomed to the yoke, and that from the time they enter into God's family, Psal. cxxix. 1—3. God sees it good for them, Lam. iii. 27, 28.

2. There is a particular yoke of affliction, which God has chosen for them, that hangs about them, and is seldom, if ever, off them, Luke ix. 23. That is their special trial, the crook in their lot, the yoke which lies on them for their constant exercise. Their other trials may be changed, but that is a weight that still hangs about them, bowing them down.

Secondly, Lowliness in their disposition and tenor of spirit. They are a generation of lowly humble ones, whose spirits God has by his grace brought down from their natural height. And thus,

1. They think soberly and meanly of themselves; what they are, 2 Cor xii. 11; what they can do, 2 Cor. iii. 5; what are they worth, Gen. xxxii. 10; and what they deserve, Lam. iii. 22. Viewing themselves in the glass of the divine law and perfection, they see themselves a mass of imperfection and sinfulness, Job xlii. 5, 6.

2. They think highly and honourably of God, Psal. cxliv. 3. They are taught by the Spirit what God is, and so entertain elevated thoughts of him. They consider him as the Sovereign of the world, his perfections as infinite, his work as perfect. They look on him as the fountain of happiness, as a God in Christ, doing all things well, trusting his wisdom, goodness, and love, even where they cannot see, Heb. xi. 8.

3. They think favourably of others, as far as in justice they may, Phil. ii. 3. Though they cannot hinder themselves to see their glaring faults, yet they are ready withal to acknowledge their excellencies, and esteem them so far. And because they see more into their own mercies and advantages for holiness, and misimproving thereof, than they can see into others, they are apt to look on others as better than themselves, circumstances compared.

4. They are sunk down into a state of subordination to God and his will, Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2. Pride sets up a man against God, lowliness brings him back to his place, and lays him down at the feet of his sovereign Lord, saying, "Thy will be done on earth, &c. They seek no more the command, but are content that God himself sit at the helm of their affairs, and manage all for them, Psal. xlvii. 4.

5. They are not bent on high things, but disposed to stoop to low things, Psal. cxxxi. 1. Lowliness levels the towering imaginations, which pride mounts up against heaven; draws a veil over all personal worth and excellencies before the Lord; and yields a man's all to the Lord, to be as stepping stones to the throne of his glory, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

Lastly, They are apt to magnify mercies bestowed on them, Gen. xxxii. 10. Pride of heart overlooks and vilifies mercies one is possessed of, and fixeth the eye on what is wanting in one's condition, making one like the flies which pass over the sound places, and swarm together on the sore. On the contrary, lowliness teaches men to recount the mercies they enjoy in the lowest condition, and to set a mark on the good things they have possessed, or yet do, Job ii. 10.

Thirdly, A spirit brought down to their lot. Their lot is a low and afflicted one; but their spirit is as low, being through grace brought down to it. We may take it up in these five things,

1. They submit to it as just, Mic. vii. 9. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." There are

no hardships in our condition, but we have procured them to ourselves; and it is therefore just we kiss the rod, and be silent under it, and so lower our spirits to our lot. If they complain, they have their complaints on themselves; their hearts rise not up against the Lord, far less do they open their mouths against the heavens. They justify God, and condemn themselves, reverencing his holiness and spotless righteousness in his proceedings against them.

2. They go quietly under it as tolerable, Lam. iii. 26—29. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the "yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." While the unsubdued spirit rageth under the yoke, as a bullock unaccustomed to it, the spirit brought to the lot goes softly under it They see it is of the Lord's mercy that it is not worse; they take up the naked cross, as God lays it down, without these overweights upon it, that turbulent passions add thereto; and so it becomes really more easy than they thought it could have been, like a burden fitted on the back.

3. They are satisfied in it, as drawing their comfort from another airth than their outward condition; even as the house stands fast when the prop is taken away that it did not lean upon. "Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither the fruit be in the vine—yet I will rejoice in the Lord,"—Hab. iii. 17, 18. Thus did David in the day of his distress, "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God," 1 Sam. xxx. 6. It is an argument of a spirit not brought down to the lot, when one is damped and sunk under the hardships of it, as if their condition in the world were the point whereon their happiness turned. It is want of mortification that makes men's comforts to wax and wane, ebb and flow, according to the various appearances of their lot in the world.

4. They have a complacency in it, as that which is fit and good for them, Isa. xxxix. 8. 2 Cor. xii. 10. Men have a sort of complacency in the working of physic, though it gripes them sore; they rationally think with themselves, that it is good and best for them; so these lowly souls consider their afflicted lot as a spiritual medicine, necessary, fit, and good for them, yea, best for them for the time, since it is ministered by their heavenly Father; and so they reach a holy complacency in their low afflicted lot.

The lowly spirit extracts this sweet out of the bitterness in the lot, considering how the Lord, by means of that afflictiong lot, stops the provision for unruly lusts, that they may be starved; how he cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of the soul's love

may run towards himself; how he pulls off and holds off the man's burden and clog of earthly comforts, that he may run the more expeditely in the way to heaven.

Lastly, They rest in it, as what they desire not to come out of, till the God that brought them into it see it meet to bring them out with his good will, Is. xxviii. 16. Though an unsubdued spirit's time for deliverance is always ready, a humbled soul will be afraid of being taken out of its afflicted lot too soon. It will not be for a moving for a change, till the heaven's moving bring it about; so this hinders not prayer, and the use of appointed means, with dependence on the Lord, but requires faith, hope, patience, and resignation, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

II. We shall consider the generation of the *proud* getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. And in their character also are three things.

First, Crosses in their lot. They also have their trials allotted them by over-ruling providence; and, let them be in what circumstances they will in the world, they cannot miss them altogether. For consider,

1. The confusion and vanity brought into the creation by man's sin, have made it impossible to get through the world, but men must meet with what will ruffle them, Eccles. i. 14. Sin has turned the world from a paradise into a thicket, there is no getting through without being scratched. As the midges in the summer will fly about those walking abroad in goodly attire, as well as about those in sordid apparel; so will crosses in the world meet with the high as well as the low.

2. The pride of their heart exposes them particularly to crosses. A proud heart will make a cross to itself, where a lowly soul would find none, Esth. v. 13. It will make a real cross ten times the weight it would be to the humble. The generation of the proud are like nettles and thorn-hedges, upon which things flying about do fix, while they pass over low and plain things: so none are more exposed to crosses than they, though none so unfit to bear them; as appears from,

Secondly, Reigning pride in their spirit. Their spirits were never subdued by a work of thorough humiliation, they remain at the height in which the corruption of nature set them; hence they can by no means bear the yoke God lays on them. The neck is swollen with the ill humours of pride and passion; hence, when the yoke once begins to touch it, they cannot have any more ease. We may view the case of the proud generation here in three things.

1. They have an over-value for themselves; and so the proud

mind says, the man should not stoop to the yoke; it is below them. What a swelling vanity is in that, Exod. v. 2. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Hence a work of humiliation is necessary to make one take on the yoke, whether of *Christ's* precepts or providence. The first error is in the understanding, whence Solomon ordinarily calls a wicked man a fool; accordingly the first stroke in conversion is there too, by conviction to humble. Men are bigger in their own conceit than they are indeed; therefore God, suiting things to what we are really, cannot please us.

2. They have an unmortified self-will arising from that overvalue for themselves, and it says he will not stoop, Exod. v. 2. The question betwixt Heaven and us is, Whether God's will or our own must carry it? Our will is corrupt, God's will is holy; they cannot agree in one. God says in his providence, our will must yield to his: but that it will not do till the iron sinew in it be broken, Rom. vi. 7. Isa. xlviii. 4.

3. They have a crowd of unsubdued passions taking part with the self-will, and they say, he shall not stoop, Rom. vii. 8, 9. and so the war begins, and there is a field of battle within and without the man, James iv. 1.

1*st*, A holy God crosses the self-will of the proud creatures by his providence, over-ruling and disposing of things contrary to their inclination; sometimes by his own immediate hand, as in the case of Cain, Gen. iv. 4, 5; sometimes by the hand of men carrying things against their mind, as in the case of Ahab, to whom Naboth refused his vineyard, 1 Kings xxi. 4.

2*dly*, The proud heart and will, unable to submit to the cross, or to bear to be controlled, rises up against it, and fights for the mastery, with its whole force of unmortified passions. The design is to remove the cross, even the crook, and bring the thing to their own mind: this is the cause of this unholy war, in which,

(1.) There is one black band of hellish passions that marches upward, and makes an attack on Heaven itself, *viz.* discontent, impatience, murmuring, fretting, and the like. "The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord," Prov. xix. 3. These fire the breast, make the countenance fall, Gen. iv. 5. let off sometimes a volley of indecent and passionate complaints, Jude, 16. and sometimes of blasphemies, 2 Kings vi. 33.

(2.) There is another that marches forward, and makes an attack on the instrument, or instruments of the cross, *viz.* anger, wrath, fury, revenge, bitterness, &c. Prov. xxvii. 4. These carry the man out of the possession of himself, Luke xxi. 19. fill the heart with a boiling heat, Psal. xxix. 3. the mouth with clamour and evil-speak-

ing, Eph. iv. 31. and threatenings are breathed out, Acts ix. 1. and sometimes set the hands on work, so as to have a most heavy event, Matth. v. 21, 22. as in the case of Ahab against Naboth.

Thus the proud carry on the war, but oft-times they lose the day, and the cross remains immoveable for all they can do; yea, and sometimes they themselves fall in the quarrel, it ends in their ruin, Exod. xv. 19, 20. But that is not the case in the text. We are to consider them as,

Thirdly, Getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. This speaks,

1. Holy providence yielding to the man's unmortified self-will, and letting it go according to his mind, Gen. vi. 3. God sees it meet to let the struggle with him fall, for it prevails not to his good, Is. i. 5. So the reins are laid on the proud man's neck, and he has what he would be at. "Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone," Hos. iv. 17.

2. The lust remaining in its strength and vigour, Psal. lxxviii. 30. "They were not estranged from their lust." God, in the method of his covenant, sometimes gives his people their will, and sets them where they would be: but then, in that case, the lust for the thing is mortified, and they are as weaned children, Psal. x. 17. But here the lust remains rampant; the proud seek meat for it, and get it.

3. The cross removed, the yoke taken off, Psal. lxxviii. 29. They could not think of bringing their mind to their lot; but they thwarted with it, wrestled and fought against, till it is brought up to their mind: so the day is their own, the victory is on their side.

4. *Lastly*, The man is pleased in his having carried his point, even as one is when he is dividing the spoil, 1 Kings xxi. 18, 19.

Thus the case of the afflicted lowly generation, and the proud generation prospering, is stated. Now,

III. I am to confirm the doctrine or the decision of the text, That the case of the former is better than that of the latter. It is better to be in a low afflicted condition, with the spirit humbled and brought down to the lot, than to be of a proud and high spirit, getting the lot brought up to it, and matters go to will and wish, according to one's mind. This will appear from the following considerations:

First, Humility is so far preferable to pride, that in no circumstances whatsoever its preferableness can fail. Let all the afflictions in a world attend the humble spirit, and all the prosperity in the world attend pride, humility will still have the better; as gold in a dunghill is more excellent than so much lead in a cabinet. For,

1. Humility is a piece of the image of God. Pride is the masterpiece of the image of the devil. Let us view him who was the express image of the Father's person, and we shall behold him meek and lowly in heart, Matth. xi. 29. None more afflicted, yet his spirit perfectly brought down to his lot, Is. liii. 7. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." That is a shining piece of the divine image: for though God cannot be low in respect of his state and condition, yet he is of infinite condescension, Is. lvii. 15. None bears as he, Rom. ii. 4. nor suffers patiently so much contradiction to his will, which is proposed to us for our encouragement in affliction, as it shone in Christ, "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 3.

Pride, on the other hand, is the very image of the devil, 1 Tim. iii. 6. Will we value ourselves on the height of our spirits? Satan will vie with the highest of us in that point; for though he is the most miserable, yet he is the proudest in the whole creation. There is the greatest distance between his spirit and his lot; the former is as high as the throne of God, the latter as low as hell: and as it is impossible that ever his lot should be brought up to his spirit; so his spirit will never come down to his lot: and therefore he will be eternally in a state of war with his lot. Hence, even at this time, he has no rest, but goes about, seeks rest indeed, but finds none.

Now, is it not better to be like God, than like the devil? Like him who is the fountain of all good, than him who is the spring and sink of all evil? Can any thing possibly cast the balance here, and turn the preference to the other side? "Then better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly," &c.

2. Humility and lowliness of spirit qualify us for friendly communion and intercourse with God in Christ. Pride makes God our enemy, 1 Pet. v. 5. Our happiness here and hereafter depends on our friendly intercourse with heaven. If we have not that, nothing can make up our loss, Psal. xxx. 5. If we have that, nothing can make us miserable, Rom. viii. 31.—"If God be for us, who can be against us?" Now, who are they whom God is for, but the humble and lowly. They who being in Christ are so made like him. He blesses them, and declares them the heirs to the crown of glory: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, Matth. v. 3. He will look to them be their condition never so low, while he overlooks others, Is. lxvi. 2. He will have respect to them, however they be despised: "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect to the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off,"

Psal. cxxxviii. 6. He will dwell with them, however poorly they dwell, Is. lvii. 15. He will certainly exalt them in due time, however low they lie now Is. xl. 4.

Whom is he against? Whom does he resist? The proud. Them he curseth, Jer. xvii. 5. and that curse will dry up their arm at length. The proud man is God's rival; he makes himself his own god, and would have those about him make him theirs too: he rages, he blusters if they will not fall down before him. But God will bring him down, Is. xl. 4. Psal. xviii. 27.

Now, is it not better to be qualified for communion with God, than to have him engaged against us at any rate?

3. Humility is a duty pleasing to God, pride a sin pleasing to the devil, Is. lvii. 15. 1 Tim. iii. 6. God requires us to be humble, especially under affliction—"and be clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5, 6. That is our becoming garment. The humble publican was accepted, the proud Pharisee rejected. We may say of the generation of the proud, as 1 Thess. ii. 10. "Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." They please neither God nor men, but only themselves and Satan, whom they resemble in it. Now, duty is ay better than sin at any rate.

Secondly, They whose spirits are brought down to their afflicted lot, have much quiet and repose of mind, while the proud, that must have their lot brought up to their mind, have much disquiet, trouble, and vexation. Consider here, that, on the one hand,

1. Quiet of mind, and ease within, is a great blessing, upon which the comfort of life depends. Nothing without this can make one's life happy, Dan. v. 6. And where this is maintained nothing can make it miserable, John xvi. 33. This being secured in God, there is a defiance bid to all the troubles of the world, Psal. xlvi. 2, 3, 4. Like the child sailing in the midst of the rolling waves.

2. The spirit brought down to the lot makes and maintains this inward tranquillity. Our whole trouble in our lot in the world riseth from the disagreement of our mind therewith: let the mind be brought to the lot, and the whole tumult is instantly hushed; let it be kept in that disposition, and the man shall stand at ease in his affliction, like a rock unmoved with waters beating on it, Col. iii. 15. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called."—

On the other hand consider,

1. What disquiet of mind the proud do suffer ere they can get their lot brought up to their mind.—"They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and they weary themselves to commit iniquity," Jer. ix. 5. James iv. 2. "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to

have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not."—What arrows of grief go through their heart? What torture of anxiety, fretting and vexation must they endure? What contrary passions do fight within them? and what sallies of passion do they make? What uneasiness was Haman in, before he could carry the point of the revenge against Mordecai, obtaining the king's decree?

2. When the thing is got to their mind, it will not quit the cost. The enjoyment thereof brings not so much satisfaction and pleasure, as the want of it gives pain. This was evident in Rachel's case as to the having of children, and in that case, Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31. There is a dead fly in the ointment that mars the savour they expected to find in it. Fruit plucked off the tree of providence, ere it is ripe, will readily set the teeth on edge. It proves like the manna kept over night, Exod. xvi. 20.

3. They have no sure hold of it; it doth not last with them. Either it is taken from them soon, and they are just where they were again, "I gave thee a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath," Hos. xiii. 11. having a root of pride, it quickly withers away; or else they are taken from it, that they have no access to enjoy it. So Haman obtained the decree; but ere the day of the execution came he was gone.

Thirdly, They that get their spirit brought down to their afflicted lot, do gain a point far more valuable than they who in their pride force up their lot to their mind, Prov. xvi. 32. "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." This will appear, if we consider,

1. The latter makes but a better condition in outward things, the former makes a better man. The life is more than meat.—The man himself is more valuable than all external conveniencies that attend him. What therefore betters the man is preferable to what betters only his condition. Who doubts, but where two are sick, and the one gets himself transported from a coarse bed to a fine one, but the sickness still remaining, the other lies still in the coarse bed, but his sickness is removed, that the case of the latter is preferable? So, &c.

2. The subduing of our passions is more excellent than to have the whole world subdued to our will: for then we are masters of ourselves, according to that, Luke xxi. 19. Whereas, in the other case, we are still slaves to the worst of masters, Rom. vi. 16. In the one case we are safe, blow what storm will, in the other we lie exposed to thousands of dangers, Prov. xxv. 28. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls."

Lastly, When both shall come to be judged, it will appear the one has multiplied the tale of their good works, in bringing their spirit to their lot; the other the tale of their ill works, in bringing their lot to their spirit. We have to do with an omniscient God, in whose eyes every internal action is a work good or bad, to be reckoned for, Rom. ii. 16.

An afflicted lot is painful, but, where it is well managed, it is very fruitful; it exercises the graces of the Spirit in a Christian, which otherwise would lie dormant. But there is never an act of resignation to the will of God under the cross, nor an act of trusting in him for his help, but they will be recorded in Heaven's register as good works, Mal. iii. 16. And these are occasioned by affliction.

On the other hand, there is never a rising of the proud heart against the lot, nor a faithless attempt to bring it to our mind, whether it succeed or not, but it passes for an ill work before God. How then will the tale of such be multiplied by the war in which this spoil is divided!

USE I. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. It is not always best for folk to get their will. Many there are who cannot be pleased with God's will about them, and they get their own will with a vengeance, Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12.—"Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own heart's lust; and they walked in their own counsels." It may be pleasantest and gratefullest for the time, but it is not the safest. Let not people pride themselves in their carrying things that way then by strong hand; let them not triumph on such victory: the after-reckoning will open their eyes.

2. The afflicted crossed party, whose lot is kept low, is so far from being a loser, that he is a gainer thereby, if his spirit is brought down to it. And if he will see his case in the light of God's unerring word, he is in better case than if he had got all carried to his mind. In the one way the vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction, Psal. lxxviii. 29, 30, 31. In the other the vessels of mercy are fitted for glory, and so God disciplines his own, Lam. iii. 27.

3. It is better to yield to providence than to fight it out though we should win. Yielding to the sovereign disposal is both our becoming duty and our greatest interest. Taking that way we act most honourably: for what honour can there be in a creature's disputing his ground with his Creator? And we act most wisely: for whatever may be the success of some battles in that case, we may be sure victory will be on Heaven's side in the war, 1 Sam. ii. 9.—"for by strength shall no man prevail."

Lastly, It is of far greater concern for us to get our spirits brought down than our outward condition raised. But who believes this? All men strive to raise their outward condition; most men never mind the bringing down of their spirits, and few there are who apply themselves to it. And what is that but to be concerned to administer drink to the thirsty sick, but never to mind to seek a cure for them, whereby their thirst may be carried off?

Use II. As you meet with crosses in your lot in the world, let your bent be rather to get your spirit humbled and brought down, than to get the cross removed. I mean not but that ye may use all lawful means for the removal of your cross, in dependence on God; but only that you be more concerned to get your spirit to bow and ply, than to get the crook in your lot evened.

Motive 1. It is far more needful for us to have our spirits humbled under the cross, than to have the cross removed. The removal of the cross is needful only for the ease of the flesh, the humbling for the profit of our souls, to purify them and bring them into a state of health and cure.

2. The humbling of the spirit will have a mighty good effect on a crossed lot, but the removal of the cross will have none on the unhumbled spirit. The humbling will lighten the cross mightily for the time, Matth. xi. 30. and in due time carry it cleanly off, 1 Pet. v. 6. But the removal of the cross is not a means to humble the unhumbled; though it may prevent irritation, yet the disease still remains.

Lastly, Think with yourselves how dangerous and hopeless a case it is to have the cross removed ere the spirit is humbled; that is to have the means of cure pulled away, and blocked up from us, while the power of the disease is yet unbroken; to be taken off trials ere we have given any good proof of ourselves, and so to be given over of our physician as hopeless, Is. i. 5. Hos. iv. 17.

For direction, Believing the gospel, take God for your God in Christ towards your eternal salvation, and then dwell much on the thoughts of God's greatness and holiness, and of your own sinfulness, so will ye be humbled under the mighty hand of God, and in due time he will lift you up.

1 PETER v. 6.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

In the preceding part of this chapter, the apostle presseth the duties of church-officers towards the people, and then the duty of the people both towards their officers and among themselves, which he winds up in one word, *submission*. For which causes he recommends humility as the great means to bring all to their respective duties. This is inforced with an argument taken from the different treatment the Lord gives to the proud and the humble; his opposing himself to the one, and shewing favour to the other. Our text is an exhortation drawn from that consideration: and in it we have,

1. The duty we are therefore to study, *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* And herein we may notice,

(1.) The state of those whom it is proposed to, these *under the mighty hand of God*, whom his hand has humbled, or stated some way low in respect of their circumstances in the world. And by these are, I think, meant, not only such as are under particular signal afflictions, which is the lot of some, but also those, who, by the providence of God, are any manner of way lowered, which is the lot of all. All being in a state of submission or dependence on others, God has made this life a state of trial; and for that cause he has, by his mighty hand, subjected men one to another, as wives, children, servants, to husbands, parents, masters; and these again to their superiors; among whom, again, even the highest depend on those under them, as magistrates and ministers on the people, even the supreme magistrate, being *major singulis, minor universis*. This state of the world God has made for taking trial of men in their several stations and dependence on others: and therefore, when the time of trial is over, it also comes to an end. "Then cometh the end—when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power," 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. Mean time, while it lasts, it makes humility necessary to all, to prompt them to the duty they owe their superiors, to whom God's mighty hand has subjected them.

(2.) The duty itself, *viz.* humiliation of our spirits under humbling circumstances the Lord has placed us in. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* Whether it is we are under particular afflictions, which have cast us down from the height we were sometimes in, or whether we

are only inferiors in one or more relations, or whether, which is most common, both these are in our case, we must therein eye the mighty hand of God, as that which placed us there, and is over us there to hold us down in it; and so, with an awful regard thereto, crouch down under it in the temper and disposition of our spirit, suiting our spirits to our lot, and careful of performing the duty of our low sphere.

(3.) A particular spring of this duty therefore we must consider, that those who cannot quietly keep the place assigned them of God, in their afflictions or relations, but still press upward against the mighty hand that is over them, that mighty hand resists them, throwing them down, and often farther down than before; whereas it treats them with grace and favour that compose themselves under it, to a quiet discharge of their duty in their situation; so, eyeing this, we must set ourselves to humble ourselves.

2. The infallible issue of that course, *that he may exalt you in due time.* The particle *that,* is not always to be understood finally, as denoting the end or design the agent proposes to himself, but sometimes eventually only, as denoting the event or issue of the action, John ix. 2. 1 John ii. 19. So here, the meaning is not, *humble yourselves,* on design *he may exalt you,* but—and it shall issue in his exalting you. Compare James iv. 10.

(1.) Here is a happy event of humiliation of spirit secured, and that is exaltation or lifting up on high by the power of God, *that he, &c.* Exalting will as surely follow on humiliation of spirit, suitable to the low condition, as the morning follows the night, or the sun riseth after the dawning. And these words are fitted to obviate the objections that the world and our corrupt hearts are apt to make against bringing down the spirit to the low condition.

Object. 1. *If we let our spirit fall, we will lie always among folk's feet, and they will trample on us. Answ.* No: pride of spirit unsubdued will bring men to lie among the feet of others for ever, Is. lxvi. 24. But humiliation of spirit will bring them undoubtedly out from among their feet, Mal. iv. 2, 3. They that humble themselves now will be exalted for ever; they will be brought out of their low situation and circumstances. Cast ye yourselves even down with your low lot, and assure yourselves ye shall not lie there.

Object. 2. *If we do not raise ourselves, none will raise us: and therefore we must see to ourselves to do ourselves right. Answ.* That is wrong. Humble ye yourselves in respect of your spirits, and God will raise you up in respect of your lot or low condition; and they that have God engaged for raising them, have no reason to say they have none to do it for them. Bringing down the spirit is our

duty, raising us up is God's work: let us not forfeit the privilege of God's raising us up, by arrogating that work to ourselves, taking it out of his hand.

Object. 3. *But surely we will never rise high, if we let our spirits fall.* *Answ.* That is wrong too. God will not only raise the humble ones, but he will lift them up on high; for so the word signifies. They shall be as high at length as ever they were low, were they ever so low; nay, the exaltation will bear proportion to the humiliation.

(2.) Here is the date of that happy event, when it will fall out. In due time, or in the season, the proper season for it, Gal. vi. 9.—"In due season we shall reap, if we faint not." We are apt to weary in humbling trying circumstances, and ay we would have up our head, John vii. 6. But Solomon observes, there is a time for every thing when it does best, and the wise will wait it, Eccles. iii. There is a time too for exalting them that humble themselves; God has set it, and it is the due time for the purpose, the time when it does best, even as sowing in the spring, and reaping in the harvest. When that time comes, your exalting shall no longer be put off, and it would come too soon should it come before that time.

DOCTRINE I. *The bent of one's heart, in humbling circumstances, should lie towards a suitable humbling of the spirit, as under God's mighty hand placing us in them.*

I. Some things supposed in this. It supposeth and bears in it, that,

1. God brings men into humbling circumstances, Ezek. xvii. 24. "And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree."—There is a root of pride in the hearts of all men on earth, that must be mortified ere they can be meet for heaven: and therefore no man can miss, in this time of trial, some things that will give a proof, whether he can stoop or no. And God brings them into humbling circumstances for that very end, Deut. viii. 2.—"The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart."

2. These circumstances prove pressing as a weight on the heart, tending to bear it down, Psal. cvii. 12. "Therefore he brought down their heart with labour."—They strike at the grain of the heart, and cross the natural inclination: whence a trial natively ariseth, whether, when God lays on his mighty hand, the man can yield under it or not; and consequently, whether he is meet for heaven or not.

3. The heart is naturally apt to rise against these humbling circumstances, and consequently against the mighty hand that brings and keeps them on. The man naturally bends his force to get off the weight, that he may get up his head, seeking more to please himself than to please his God, Job xxxv. 9, 10.—"They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty: but none saith, Where is God my maker?" This is the first gate the heart runs to in humbling circumstances, and in this way the unsubdued spirits hold on.

4. But what God requires, is, rather to labour to bring down the heart than to get up the head, James iv. 10. Here lies the proof of one's meetness for heaven; and then is one in the way heavenward, when he is more concerned to get down his heart, than up his head, to go calmly under his burden than to get it off, to crouch under the mighty hand than to put it off him.

Lastly, There must be a noticing of God as our party, in humbling circumstances—"Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Mic. vi. 9. There is an abjectness of spirit, whereby some give up themselves to the will of others in the harshest treatment, merely to please them, without regard to the authority and command of God. This is real meanness of spirit, whereby one lies quietly to be trampled on by a fellow-worm, from its imaginary weight: and none so readily fall into it as the proud, at sometimes to serve their own turn, Acts xii. 22. These are *men-pleasers*, Eph. vi. 6. with Gal. i. 10.

11. What are these humbling circumstances the mighty hand brings them into. Supposing here, what was before taught concerning the crook in the lot's being of God's making, these are circumstances,

1. Of imperfection. God has placed all men in such circumstances, under a variety of wants and imperfections, Phil. iii. 12. We can look nowhere where we are not beset with them. There is a heap of natural and moral imperfections about us: our bodies and our souls, in all their faculties, are in a state of imperfection. The pride of all glory is stained, and it is a shame to us not to be humbled under such wants as attend us; it is like a beggar strutting in his rags.

2. Of inferiority in relations, whereby men are set in the lower place in relations and society, and made to depend on others, 1 Cor. vii. 24. God has for trial of men's submission to himself, subjected them to others whom he has set over them, to discover what regard they will pay to his authority and commands at second hand. Dominion or superiority is a part of the divine image, 1 Cor. xi. 7. And therefore reverence of them, consisting in an awful regard to

that ray of the divine image shining in them, is necessarily required, Eph. v. 33. Heb. xii. 9. compare Psal. cxi. 9. The same holds in all other relations and superiorities, *viz.* that they are so far in the place of God to their relatives, Psal. xxxii. 6. And though the parties be worthless in themselves, that looseth not one from the debt to them, Acts xxiii. 4, 5. Rom. xiii. 7. The reason is, because it is not their qualities, but their character, which is the ground of that debt of reverence and subjection; and the trial God takes of us in that matter turns not on the point of the former, but of the latter.

Now, God having placed us in these circumstances of inferiority, all refractoriness in all things, not contrary to the command of God, is a rising up against his mighty hand, Rom. xiii. 2. because it is mediately upon us for that effect, though it is man's hand that is immediately on us.

3. Of contradiction, tending directly to baulk us of our will. This was a part of our Lord's state of humiliation, and the apostle supposes it will be a part of ours too, Heb. xii. 3. There is a perfect harmony in heaven, no one to contradict another there; for they are in their state of retribution and exaltation: but we are here in our state of trial and humiliation, and therefore cannot miss contradiction, be we placed ever so high.

Whether these contradictions be just or unjust, God trysts men with them to humble them, break them off from addictedness to their own will, and to teach them resignation and self-denial. They are in their own nature humbling, and much the same to us, as the breaking of a horse or a bullock is to them. And I believe there are many cases in which there can be no accounting for them, but by recurring to this use God has for them.

4. Of affliction, Prov. xvi. 19. Prosperity puffs up sinners with pride; and O but it is hard to keep a low spirit with a high and prosperous lot. But God by affliction calls men down from their heights to sit in the dust, plucks away their jay-feathers wherein they prided themselves, rubs the paint and varnish from off the creature, whereby it appears in its native deformity. There are various kinds of affliction, some more, some less humbling, but all of them are humbling.

Wherefore, not to lower the spirit under the affliction, is to pretend to rise up when God is casting and holding down, with a witness, and cannot miss, if continued in, to provoke the Lord to break us in pieces, Ezek. xxiv. 13. For the afflicting hand is mighty.

Lastly, Of sin as the punishment of sin. We may allude to that, Job xxx. 19. All the sin in the world is a punishment of Adam's

first sin. Man threw himself into the mire at first, and now he is justly left weltering in it. Men wilfully make one false step, and for that cause they are justly left to make another worse; and sin hangs about all, even the best. And this is over-ruled of God for our humiliation, that we may be ashamed, and never open our mouth any more. Wherefore, not to be humble under our sinfulness, is to rise up against the mighty hand of God, and justify all our sinful departings from him, as lost to all sense of duty, and void of shame.

III. What it is, in humbling circumstances, to *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.* This is the great thing to be aimed at in our humbling circumstances: and we may take it up in these eight things.

1. Noticing the mighty hand, as employed in bringing about every thing that concerns us, either in the way of efficacy or permission, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." 2 Sam. xvi. 10. "And the king said, The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David; who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" He is the Fountain of all perfection, but we must trace our imperfections to his sovereign will. It is he that has posted every one in their relations by his providence; without him we could not meet with such contradictions; for "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he pleaseth," Prov. xxi. 1. He sends on afflictions, and he justly punishes one sin with another, Is. vi. 10.

2. A sense of our own worthlessness and nothingness before him, Psal. cxliv. 3. Looking to the infinite majesty of the mighty hand dealing with us, we should say, with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27. "Behold I am but dust and ashes," and say amen to the cry, Is. xl. 6. "All flesh is grass," &c. The keeping up of thoughts of our own excellency under the pressures of the mighty hand, is the very thing that swells the heart in pride, causing it to rise up against it. And it is the letting of all such thoughts of ourselves fall before the eyes of his glory, that is the humbling required.

3. A sense of our guilt and filthiness, Rom. iii. 10. Is. lxiv. 6. The mighty hand doth not press us down, but as sinners: it is meet then that under it we see our sinfulness; our guilt, whereby we will appear criminals justly caused to suffer; our filthiness, whereupon we may be brought to lothe ourselves: and then we will think nothing lays us lower than we well deserve. It is the overlooking our sinfulness that suffers the proud heart to swell.

4. A silent submission under the hand of God. His sovereignty challengeth this of us, Rom. ix. 20. "Nay but, O man, who art thou

that repliest against God?"—And nothing but unsubdued height and pride of spirit can allow us to answer again under the sovereign hand. A view of the sovereign hand humbled and awed the Psalmist into a submission with a profound silence, Psal. xxxix. 9. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Job i. 21. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And xl. 4, 5. "What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther." Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

5. A magnifying of his mercies towards us in the midst of all his proceedings against us, Psal. cxliv. 3. Has he laid us low? If we be duly humbled, we will wonder he has laid us no lower, Ezra ix. 13. For, however low the humble are laid, they will see they are not yet so low as their sins deserve, Lam. iii. 22.

6. A holy and silent admiration of the ways and counsels of God, as to us unsearchable, Rom. xi. 33. Pride of heart thinks nothing too high for the man, and so arraigns before its tribunal the divine proceedings, pretends to see through them, censures freely and condemns: but humiliation of spirit disposes a man to think awfully and honourably of the mysteries of providence he is not able to see through.

7. A forgetting and laying aside before the Lord all our dignity, whereby we excel others, Rev. iv. 10. Pride feeds itself on the man's real or imaginary personal excellency and dignity, and, being so inured to it before others, cannot forget it before God. Luke xviii. 11. "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men." But humiliation of spirit makes it all to evanish before him, as doth the shadow before the shining sun, and it lays the man in his own eyes, lower that any. "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man," Prov. xxx. 2.

Lastly, A submitting readily to the meanest offices requisite in or agreeable to our circumstances. Pride at every turn finds something that is below the man to condescend or stoop to, measuring by his own mind and will, not by the circumstances God has placed him in. But humility measures by the circumstances one is placed in, and readily falls in with what they require. Hereof our Saviour gives us an example, (Phil. ii. 8. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death), to be imitated, John xiii. 14. "If I then your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet."

USE. Let the bent of your heart then, in all your humbling circumstances, be towards the humbling of your spirit, as under the mighty hand of God. This lies in two things.

1. Carefully notice all your humbling circumstances, and overlook none of them. Observe your imperfections, inferiority in relations, contradictions you meet with, your afflictions, uncertainty of all things about you, and your sinfulness. Look through them designedly, and consider the steps of the conduct of providence toward you in these, that ye may know yourselves, and may not be strangers at home, blind to your own real state and case.

2. Observing what these circumstances do require of you, as suitable to them, bend your endeavours towards it, to bring your spirits into that temper of humiliation, that, as your lot is really low in all these respects, so your spirits may be low too, as under the mighty hand of God. Let this be your great aim through your whole life. your exercise every day.

Motive 1. God is certainly at work to humble one and all of us. However high any are lifted up in this world, providence has hung certain badges for humiliation on them, whether they will notice them or not, Is. xl. 6. Now it is our duty to fall in with the design of providence, that, while God is humbling us, we may be humbling ourselves, and that we may not receive humbling dispensations in vain.

2. The humiliation of our spirits will not take effect without our own agency therein: while God is working on us that way, we must work together with him; for he works on us as rational agents, who being moved, move themselves, Phil. ii. 12, 13. God by his providence may force down our lot and condition without us; but the spirit must come down voluntarily and of choice, or not at all: therefore strike in with humbling providences in humbling yourselves, as mariners spread out the sails when the wind begins to blow, that they may go away before it.

3. If ye do not, ye resist the mighty hand of God, Acts vii. 51. Ye resist in so far as ye do not yield, but stand as a rock, keeping your ground against your Maker in humbling providence, Jer. v. 3. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved: thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." Much more when ye work against him to force up your condition, which ye may see God means to hold down. And of this resistance consider,

(1.) The sinfulness, what an evil thing it is. It is a direct fighting against God, a shaking off of subjection to our sovereign Lord, and a rising in rebellion against him, Is. xiv. 9.

(2.) The folly of it. How unequal is the match? How can the struggle end well? Job ix. 4. What else can possibly be the issue

of the potsherds of the earth dashing against the Rock of ages, but that they be broken to pieces? We must say, as Job xli. 8. All men must certainly bow or break under the mighty hand.

4. This is the time of humiliation, even the time of this life. "Every thing is beautiful in its season:" and the bringing down of the spirit now is beautiful, as in the time thereof, even as the ploughing and sowing of the ground is in the spring. Consider,

(1.) Humiliation of spirit "is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 4. As he has a special aversion to pride of heart, he has a special liking of humility, chap. v. 5. The humbling of sinners, and bringing them down from their heights, wherein the corruption of their nature has set them, is the great end of his word, and of his providences.

It is no easy thing to humble men's spirits; it is not little that will do it; it is a work that is not soon done. There is need of a digging deep for a thorough humiliation in the work of conversion, Luke vi. 48. Many a stroke must be given at the root of the tree of the natural pride of the heart ere it fall; oft-times it seems to be fallen, and yet it rises again. And, even when the root-stroke is given in believers, the rod of pride buds again, so that there is still occasion for new humbling work.

(3.) The whole time of this life is appointed for humiliation. This was signified by the forty years the Israelites had in the wilderness, Deut. viii. 2. It was so to Christ, and therefore it must be so to men, Heb. xii. 2. And in that time they must either be formed according to his image, or else appear as reprobate silver that will not take it on by any means, Rom. viii. 29. So that whatever lifting up men may now and then get in this life, the habitual course of it will still be humbling.

(4.) There is no humbling after, Rev. xxii. 11. If the pride of the heart be not brought down in this life, it will never be: no kindly humiliation is to be expected in another life. There the proud will be broken in pieces, but not softened; their lot and condition will be brought to the lowest pass, but the unhumbleness of their spirits will still remain, whence they will be in eternal agonies, through the opposition betwixt their spirits and lot, Rev. xvi. 21.

Wherefore beware lest ye sit your time of humiliation; humbled we must be, or we are gone for ever; and this is the time, the only time of it: therefore make your hay while the sun shines; strike in with humbling providences, and fight not against them while ye have them, Acts xiii. 41. The season of grace will not last; if ye sleep in seed-time, ye will beg in harvest.

5. This is the way to turn humbling circumstances to a good ac-

count: so that instead of being losers, ye would be gainers by them, Psal cxix. 71. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Would ye gather grapes of these thorns and thistles, set yourselves to get your spirits humbled by them.

(1.) Humiliation of spirit is a most valuable thing in itself, Prov. xvi. 32. It cannot be bought too dear. Whatever one is made to suffer, if his spirit is thereby brought down, he has what is well worth bearing all the hardship for, 1 Pet. iii. 4.

(2.) Humility of spirit brings many advantages along with it. It is a fruitful bough, well loaden, where ever it is. It contributes to one's ease under the cross, Matth. xi. 30. Lam. iii. 27, 28, 29. It is a sacrifice particularly acceptable to God, Psal. li. 17. The eye of God is particularly on such for good, Is. lxvi. 2.—"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Yea, he dwells with them, Is. lvii. 15. And it carries a line of wisdom through one's whole conduct, Prov. xi. 2. —"With the lowly is wisdom."

Lastly, Consider it is a mighty hand that is at work with us; the hand of the mighty God: let us then bend our spirits towards a compliance with it, and not wrestle against it. Consider,

(1.) We must fall under it. Since the design of it is to bring us, down, we cannot stand before it; for it cannot miscarry in its designs, Is. xlvi. 10.—"My counsel shall stand."—So fall before it we must, either in the way of duty or judgment, Psal. xlvi. 4. "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee."

(2.) They that are so wise as to fall in humiliation under the mighty hand, be they never so low, the same hand will raise them up again, James iv. 10. In a word, be the proud never so high, God will bring them down. Be the humble never so low, God will raise them up.

Directions for reaching this humiliation.

1. *General Directions.*

Direction 1. Fix it in your heart to seek some spiritual improvement of the conduct of providence towards you, Micah vi. 9. Till once your heart get a set that way, your humiliation is not to be expected, Hos. xiv. 9. But nothing more reasonable, if we would act either like men or Christians, than to aim at what is so grievous to the flesh unto the profit of the spirit; that if we are losers at one hand, we may be gainers at another.

2. Settle the matter of your eternal salvation, in the *first* place,

by betaking yourself to Christ, and taking God for your God in him, according to the gospel-offer, Hos. ii. 19. Heb. viii. 10. Let your humbling circumstances move you to this, that while the creature dries up, you may go to the Fountain: for it is impossible to reach due humiliation under the mighty hand, without faith in him as your God and Friend, Heb. xi. 6. 1 John iv. 19.

Lastly, Use the means of soul-humbling in the faith of the promise, Psal. xxviii. 7. Moses smiting the rock, in the faith of the promise, made waters gush out, which otherwise would not have appeared. Let us do likewise in dealing with our rocky hearts. They must be laid on the soft bed of the gospel, and struck there, as Joel ii. 13.—"Turn to the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful,"—or they will never kindly break or fall in humiliation.

II. *Particular Directions.*

1. Assure yourselves that there are no circumstances so humbling that you are in, but you may get your heart acceptably brought down to them, 1 Cor. x. 13.—"But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." This is truth, 2 Cor. xii. 9.—"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—And you would be persuaded of it with application to yourselves, if ever you would reach the end, Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." God allows you to be persuaded of it, whatever is your weakness and the difficulty of the task:—"For our sakes this is written: that he that plougheth should plough in hope, and he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope, 1 Cor. ix. 10. And the belief thereof is a piece of the life of faith, 2 Tim. ii. 1. If you have no hope of success, your endeavours, as they will be heartless, so they will be vain. "Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees," Heb. xii. 12.

2. Whatever hand is, or is not, in your humbling circumstances, do you take God for your party, and consider yourselves therein as under his mighty hand, Micah vi. 9. Men in their humbling circumstances overlook God: so they find not themselves called to humility under them; they fix their eyes on the creature-instrument, and instead of humility, their hearts rise. But take him for your party, that ye may remember the battle, and do no more, Job xli. 8.

3. Be much in the thoughts of God's infinite greatness: consider his holiness and majesty, fit to awe you into deepest humiliation, Is. vi. 3.—5. Job met with many humbling providences in his case, but he was never sufficiently humbled under them, till the Lord

made a new discovery of himself unto him, in his infinite majesty and greatness. He kept his ground against his friends, and stood to his points, till the Lord took that method with him. It was begun with thunder, Job xxxviii. 1, 2. Then followed God's voice out of the whirlwind, chap. xxxviii. 1. whereon Job is brought down, chap. xl. 4, 5. It is renewed till he is farther humbled, chap. xlii. 5, 6. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

4. Inure yourselves silently to admit mysteries in the conduct of providence towards you, which you are not able to comprehend, but will adore, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" That was the first word God said to Job, chap. xxxviii. 2. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" It took him by the heart, stuck with him, and he comes over it again, chap. xlii. 3. as that which particularly brought him to his knees to the dust. Even in these steps of providence, which we seem to see far into, we may well allow, there are some mysteries beyond what we see. And, in those which are perplexing and puzzling, sovereignty should silence us; his infinite wisdom should satisfy, though we cannot see.

5. Be much in the thoughts of your own sinfulness, Job xl. 4. "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." It is overlooking that which gives us so much ado with humbling circumstances. While the eyes are held, that they cannot see sin, the heart riseth against them; but when they are opened, it falls. Wherefore whenever God is dealing with you in humbling dispensations, turn your eyes upon that occasion, on the sinfulness of your nature, heart, and life, and that will help forward your humiliation.

6. Settle it in your heart, that there is need of all the humbling circumstances, you are put in. This is truth, 1 Pet. i. 6.—"Though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." God brings no needless trials upon us, afflicts none but as their need requires, Lam. iii. 33. "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." That is an observable difference betwixt our earthly and heavenly Father's correction, Heb. xii. 10.—"they, after their own pleasure; but HE for our profit, that we might be partakers of HIS holiness." Look to the temper of your own hearts and nature, how apt to be lift up, forget God, carried away with the vanities of the world; what foolishness is bound up in your heart. Thus you will see the need of humbling circumstances for ballast, and of the rod for the fool's back; and if at any time you cannot see that need, believe on the ground of God's infinite wisdom, that does nothing in vain.

7. Believe a kind design of providence in them towards you. God calls us to this, as the key that opens the heart under them, Rev. iii. 19. Satan suggests suspicions to the contrary, as the bar which may hold it shut, 2 Kings vi. 33.—"This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" As long as the suspicions of an ill design in them against us reigns, the creature will, like the worm at the man's foot, put itself in the best posture of defence it can, and harden itself in sorrow: but the faith of a kind design will cause it open out itself in humility before him.

CASE. O! if I knew there were a kind design in it, I would willingly bear it, although there were more of it; but I fear a ruining design of providence against me therein. ANSW. Now, what word of God, or discovery from heaven, have you to ground these fears upon? None at all, but from hell, 1 Cor. x. 13. What think you the design towards you in the gospel is? Can you believe no kind design towards you in all the words of grace there heaped up? What is that, I pray, but black unbelief in its hue of hell, Is. lv. 1. flying in the face of the truth of God, and making him a liar, 1 John v. 10, 11. The gospel is a breathing of love and good-will to the world of mankind-sinners, Tit. ii. 11. and iii. 4. 1 John iv. 14. and John iii. 17. But ye believe it not, in that case, more than devils believe it. But if ye can believe a kind design there, ye must believe it in your humbling circumstances too; for the design of providence cannot be contrary to the design of the gospel: but contrarywise the latter is to help forward to the other.

8. Think with yourselves, that this life is the time of trial for heaven, James i. 12. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." And therefore there should be a welcoming of humbling circumstances on that view, ver. 2.—"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." If there is an honourable office, or beneficial employment to be bestowed, men strive to be taken on trials for it, in hope they may be thereupon legally admitted to it. Now God takes trial of men for heaven by humbling circumstances, as the whole Bible teacheth: and shall men be so very loath to stoop to them? I would ask you,

(1.) Is it nothing to you to stand a candidate for glory, to be put on trials for heaven? Is there not an honour in it; an honour which all the saints have had? James v. 11. "Behold we count them happy that endure," &c. And a fair prospect in it? 2 Cor. iv. 17. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Do but put the case, that God should overlook you in that case, as one

whom it is needless ever to try on that head; that he should order you your portion in this life with full ease, as one that is to get no more of him: what would that be?

(2.) What a vast disproportion is there between your trials and the *glory?* Your most humbling circumstances, how light are they in comparison of the weight of *it?* The longest continued of them are but for a moment, compared with that eternal weight. Alas! there is much unbelief at the root of all our uneasiness under our humbling circumstances. Had we a clearer view of the other world, we would not make so much of either the smiles or frowns of this.

(3.) What think ye of coming foul off the trial of your humbling circumstances? Jer. vi. 29, 30.—"The lead is consumed of the fire: the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." That the issue of it be only, that your heart appear of such a temper as by no means to be humbled; and that therefore you must and shall be taken off them, while yet no humbling appears? I think the awfulness of the dispensation is such, as might set us to our knees to deprecate the lifting us up from our humbling circumstances, ere our heart be humbled, Is. i. 5. Ezek. xxiv. 13.

9. Think with yourselves, how it is by humbling circumstances the Lord prepares us for heaven: Col. i. 12. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," with 2 Cor. v. 5. The stones and timber are laid down, turned over and over, and hewed ere they be set up in the building; and not just set up as they come out of the quarry and wood. Were they capable of a choice, such of them as would refuse the iron tool would be refused a place in the building. Pray, how think ye to be made meet for heaven, by the warm sunshine of this world's ease, and getting all your will here? Nay, sirs, that would put your mouth out of taste for the joys of the other world. Vessels of dishonour are fitted for destruction that way; but vessels of honour for glory by humbling circumstances. I would here say,

1*st*, Will nothing please you but two heavens, one here, another hereafter? God has secured one heaven for the saints, one place where they shall all get their will, wish and desire; where there shall be no weight on them to hold them down: and that is in the other world. But ye must have it both here and there, or ye cannot digest it. Why do ye not quarrel too, that there are not two summers in one year; two days in the twenty four hours? The order of the one heaven is as firm as that of the years and days, and ye will not reverse it: therefore choose ye whether ye will take

your night or your day first, your winter or your summer, your heaven here or hereafter.

2*dly*, Without being humbled with humbling circumstances in this life, ye are not capable of heaven, 2 Cor. v. 5. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." Ye may indeed lie at ease here in a bed of sloth, and dream of heaven, big with hopes of a fool's paradise, wishing to cast yourselves just out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom: but without *ye be humbled* ye are not capable,

(1.) Of the Bible-heaven, that heaven described in the Old and New Testament. Is not that heaven a lifting up in due time? But how shall ye be lifted up that are never well gotten down? Where will your tears be to be wiped away? What place will there be for your triumph that will not fight the good fight? How can it be a rest to you, who cannot away with labour?

(2.) Of the saints' heaven, Rev. vii. 14. "And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This answers the question anent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints with them there: they were brought down to the dust with humbling circumstances, and out of these they came before the throne. How can ye ever think to be lifted up with them, with whom ye cannot think to be brought down?

(3.) Of CHRIST'S heaven, Heb. xii. 2.—"Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God." O consider how the forerunner made his way, Luke xxiv. 26. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And lay your accounts with it, that if ye get where he is, ye must go thither as he went, Luke ix. 23. "And he said, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

10. Give up at length with your towering hopes from this world, and confine them to the world to come. Be as pilgrims and strangers here, looking for your rest in heaven, and not till ye come there. There is a prevailing evil, Is. lvii. 10. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way: yet saidst thou not, There is no hope." —So the Babel building is still continued, though it has fallen down again and again: for men say, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars," Is. ix. 10. This makes humbling work very longsome, we are so hard to quit our grip of the creature, to fall off from the breast and be weaned. But fasten

your gripes on the other world, and let your gripe of this go: so shall *ye be humbled indeed under the mighty hand.* The faster you gripe the happiness of that world, the easier will it be to accommodate yourselves to your humbling circumstances here.

Lastly, Make use of Christ in all his offices, for your humiliation under your humbling circumstances. That only is kindly humiliathat comes in that way, Zech. xii. 10. "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn," &c. That you must do by trusting on him for that effect,

(1.) As a priest for you. You have a conscience full of guilt, and that will make one uneasy in any circumstances, and far more in humbling circumstances; it will be like a thorn in the shoulder on which a burden is laid. But the blood of Christ will purge the conscience, draw out the thorn, give ease, Is. xxxiii. 24. and fit for service, doing or suffering, Heb. ix. 14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ—purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

(2.) As your prophet to teach you. We have need to be taught rightly to discern our humbling circumstances: for often we mistake them so far, that they prove an oppressing load; whereas, could we rightly see them, just as God sets them to us, they would be humbling, but not so oppressive. Truly we need Christ, and the light of his word and Spirit, to let us see our cross and trial, as well as our duty, Psal. xxv. 9, 10.

(3.) As your king. You have a stiff heart loath to bow even in humbling circumstances: take a lesson from Moses what to do in such a case, Exod. xxxiv. 9. "And he said—Let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us, (for it is a stiff-necked people), and pardon our iniquity, and our sin." Put it in his hand that is strong and mighty, Psal. xxiv. 8. He is able to cause it melt, and like wax, before the fire, turn to the seal.

Think on these directions, in order to put them in practice, remembering that if ye "know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Remember, humbling work is a work that will fill your hand while you live here, and that you cannot come to the end of till death; and humbling circumstances will attend you, while you are in this lower world. A change of them ye may get; but a freedom from them ye cannot, till ye come to heaven. So the humbling circumstances of our imperfections, relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainties, and sinfulness, will afford matter of exercise to us while here. What remains of the purpose of this text, I shall comprise in,

DOCTRINE II. *There is a due time, wherein those that now humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, will certainly be lifted up.*

We shall take,

FIRST, A general view of this point. And consider,

I. Some things supposed and implied in it. It bears,

1. That those who shall share of his lifting up, must lay their accounts, in the first place, with a casting down, Rev. vii. 14. John xvi. 33. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." There is no coming to the promised land, according to the settled method of grace, but through the wilderness; nor entering into this exaltation, but through a strait gate. If we cannot away with casting down, we will not taste of the sweet of the lifting up.

2. Being cast down by the *mighty hand of God*, we must learn to lie still and quiet under it, till the same hand that casts us down raise us up, if we would share of this promised lifting up, Lam. iii. 27. It is not the being cast down into humbling circumstances by the providence of God, but the coming down of our spirits under them by the grace of God, that brings us within the compass of this promise.

3. Never humbled in humbling circumstances, never lifted up in the way of this promise. Men may keep their spirits on the high bend in their humbling circumstances, and in that case may get a lifting up, Prov. xvi. 19. But note this, that what they get will be a lifting up, to the end they may get the more grievous fall. "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down in a moment," Psal. lxxiii. 18. But they who will not humble themselves in humbling circumstances, will find their obstinacy a need-nail, that will keep their misery ever fast on them without remedy.

4. Humility of spirit in humbling circumstances ascertains a lifting up out of them some time with the good-will and favour of Heaven, Luke xviii. 14. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Solomon observes, Prov. xv. 1. that "a soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." And so it is, that while the proud through their obstinacy, do but wreathe the yoke faster about their own necks, the yielding humble ones, by their yielding, make their relief sure, 1 Sam. ii. 8, 9, 10. "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory—He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries

of the Lord shall be broken in pieces."—So the cannon-ball breaks down a stone-wall, while the yielding packs of wool take away its force.

5. There is an appointed time for the lifting up of those that humble themselves in their humbling circumstances, Hab. ii. 3. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." To every thing there is a time, as for humbling, so for lifting up, Eccles. iii. 3. We know it not, but God knows it, who has appointed it. Let not the humble one say, I will never be lifted up: there is a time fixed for it, as precisely as for the rising of the sun, after the long and dark night, or the return of the spring after the long and sharp winter.

6. It is not to be expected, that immediately upon one's humbling himself, the lifting up is to follow. No, one is not only to lie down under the mighty hand, but lie still waiting the due time; humbling work is longsome work: the Israelites had forty years of it in the wilderness. God's people must be brought to put a blank in his hand, as to the time, and while they have a long night of walking in darkness, must trust, Is. l. 10. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

7. The appointed time for the lifting up is the due time, the time fittest for it, wherein it will come most seasonably. "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not," Gal. vi. 9. For that is the time God has chosen for it: and be sure his choice, as the choice of infinite wisdom, is the best; and therefore faith sets to wait it, Is. xxviii. 16.—"He that believeth shall not make haste." There is much of the beauty of a thing depends on the timing of it, and he has fixed that in all he does, Eccles. iii. 11. "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time."

Lastly, The lifting up of the humbled will not miss to come in the appointed and due time, Hab. ii. 3. Time makes no halting, it is running day and night: so the due time is fast coming, and, when it comes, it will bring the lifting up along with it. Let the humbling circumstances be ever so low, ever so hopeless, it is impossible but the lifting up from them must come in the due time.

II. A word in the general to the lifting up abiding those that humble themselves. There is a twofold lifting up.

1. A partial lifting up, competent to the humbled in time during this life, Psal. xxx. 1. "I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me." This is

a lifting up in part, and but in part, not wholly; and such liftings up the humbled may expect while in this world, but no more. These give a breathing to the weary, a change of burdens, but do not set them at perfect ease. So Israel, in the wilderness, in midst of their many mourning times, had some singing ones, Exod. xv. 1. Numb. xxi. 17.

2. A total lifting up, competent to them at the end of time, at death, Luke xvi. 22.—"It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."—Then the Lord deals with them no more by parcels and halves, but carries their relief to perfection, Heb. xii. 23. Then he takes off all their burdens, eases them of all their weights, and lays no more on for ever. He then lifts them up to a height they were never at before, no not when at their highest. He sets them quite above all that is low, and therein fixes them, never to be brought down more. Now there is a due time for both these.

1. For the partial lifting up. Every time is not fit for it; we are not always fit to receive comfort, an ease or a change of our burdens. God sees there are times wherein it is needful for his people to be in heaviness, 1 Pet. i. 6. To have their hearts brought down with grief, Psal. cvii. 12. But then there is a time really appointed for it in the divine wisdom, when he will think it as needful to comfort them, as before to bring down, 2 Cor. ii. 7. "So that, contraryways, ye ought rather to forgive, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow." We are in that case in the hand of God, as in the hand of our physician, who appoints the time the drawing plaister shall lie to, and when the healing plaister shall be applied, and leaves it not to the patient.

2. For the total lifting up. When we are sore oppressed with our burdens, we are ready to think, O to be away, and set beyond them all, Job vii. 2, 3. "As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed for me." But it may be fitter, for all that, that we stay a while, and wrestle with our burdens, Phil. i. 24, 25. "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith." A few days might have taken Israel out of Egypt into Canaan; but they would have been over soon there, if they had made all that speed; so they behoved to spend forty years in the wilderness, till their due time of entering Canaan should come. And be sure the saints, entering heaven, will

be convinced that the time of it is best chosen, and there will be a beauty in that it was no sooner.

And thus a lifting up is secured to the humble.

III. The certainty of the lifting up of those that humble themselves under humbling circumstances. If one would assure you, when reduced to poverty, that the time should certainly come yet, that ye should be rich; when sore sick, that ye should not die of that disease, but certainly recover, that would help you to bear your poverty and sickness the better, and ye would comfort yourselves with that prospect. However one may continue poor, and never be rich, may be sick and die of his disease; but whoever humble themselves under their humbling circumstances, we can assure them from the Lord's word, they shall certainly, without all peradventure, be lifted up out of, and relieved from their humbling circumstances; they shall certainly see the day of their ease and relief, when they shall remember their burdens as waters that fail. And ye may be assured thereof from the following considerations.

1*st*, The nature of God, duly considered, insures it, Psal. ciii. 8, 9. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever." The humbled soul looking to God in Christ, may see three things in his nature jointly securing it.

1. Infinite power that can do all things. No circumstances are so low, but he can raise them; so entangling and perplexing, but he can unravel them; so hopeless, but he can remedy them, Gen. xviii. 14. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Be our case what it will, it is never past reach with him to help it: but then is the most proper season for him to take it in hand, when all others have given it over, Deut. xxxii. 36. "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

2. Infinite goodness inclining to help. He is good and gracious in his nature, Exod. xxxiv. 6—9. And therefore his power is a spring of comfort to them, Rom. xiv. 4. Men may be willing that are not able, or able that are not willing; but infinite goodness joining infinite power in God, may ascertain the humbled of a lifting up in due time. That is a word of inconceivable sweetness, 1 John iv. 16. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. He has the bowels of a Father towards the humble, Psal. ciii. 13, "Like as a father pitieth his children: so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Yea, bowels of mercy, more tender than a mother to her sucking child, Is. xlix. 15. Where-

fore, howbeit his wisdom may see it necessary to put them in humbling circumstances, and keep them in them for a time, it is not possible he can leave them in them altogether.

3. Infinite wisdom, that does nothing in vain, and therefore will not needlessly keep one in humbling circumstances, Lam. iii. 32, 33. "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies: for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." God sends them on for humbling, as the end and design to be brought about by them: when that is obtained, and there is no more use for them that way, we may assure ourselves they will be taken off.

2*dly*, The providence of God, viewed in its stated methods of procedure with its objects, insures it. Turn your eyes which way you will on the divine providence, ye may conclude thence, that in due time the humble will be lifted up.

1. Observe the providence of God, in the revolutions of the whole course of nature, day succeeding to the longest night, a summer to the winter, a waxing to a waning of the moon, a flowing to an ebbing of the sea, &c. Let not the Lord's humbled ones be idle spectators of these things: they are for our learning, Jer. xxxi. 35—37. "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." Will the Lord's hand keep such a steady course in the earth, sea, and visible heavens, as to bring a lifting up in them after a casting down, and only forget his humbled ones? No.

2. Observe the providence of God in the dispensations thereof about the man Christ, the most noble and august object thereof, more valuable than a thousand worlds, Col. ii. 9. Did not providence keep this course with him, first humbling him, then exalting him, and lifting him up? first bring him to the dust of death, in a course of sufferings thirty-three years, then exalt him to the Father's right hand in eternity of glory? Heb. xii. 2. "Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Phil. ii. 8, 9. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." The exaltation could not fail to follow his humiliation, Luke xxiv. 26. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

And he saw and believed it would follow, as the springing of the seed doth the sowing of it, John xii. 24. There is a near concern the humbled in humbling circumstances have herein.

(1.) This is the pattern providence copies after in its conduct towards you. The Father was so well pleased with this method in the case of his own Son, that it was determined to be followed, and just copied over again in the case of all the heirs of glory, Rom. viii. 22. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born amongst many brethren." And who shall not be pleased to walk through the darkest valley treading his steps?

(2.) This is a sure pledge of your lifting up. Christ in his state of humiliation, was considered as a public person and representative, and so he is in his exaltation. So Christ's exaltation ensures your exaltation out of your humbling circumstances, Is. xxvi. 19. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust." Hos. vi. 1, 2. "Come, let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Eph. ii. 6. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Yea, he is gone into the state of glory for us, as our forerunner, Heb. vi. 20. "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever."

(3.) His humiliation was the price of our exaltation, and his exaltation a full testimony of the acceptance of its payment to the full. There are no humbling circumstances ye are in, but ye would have perished in them, had not he purchased your lifting up out of them by his own humiliation, Is. xxvi. 19. Now, his humbling grace in you is an evidence of the acceptance of his humiliation for your lifting up.

3. Observe the providence of God towards the church in all ages. This has been the course the Lord has kept with her, Psal. cxxix. 1—4. Abel was slain by the wicked Cain to the great grief of Adam and Eve, and the rest of their pious children: but then there was another seed raised up in Abel's room after, Gen. iv. 25. Noah and his sons were buried alive in the ark more than a year; but then they were brought out into a new world and blessed. Abraham for many years went childless; but at length Isaac was born. Israel was long in miserable bondage in Egypt; but at length seated in the promised land, &c. We must be content to go by the footsteps of the flock: and if in humiliation, we will surely follow them in exaltation too.

4. Observe the providence of God in the dispensations of his grace towards his children. The general rule is, 1 Pet. v. 5. "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." How are they brought into a state of grace? Is it not by a sound work of humiliation going before, Luke vi. 48. And ordinarily the greater measure of grace that is designed for one, the deeper is their humiliation before, as in Paul's case. If they are to be recovered out of a backslidden case, the same method is followed: so that deepest humiliations ordinarily make way for the greatest comforts, and the darkest hour goes before the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon them, Is. lxvi. 5—13.

Lastly, Observe the providence of God at length throwing down wicked men, however long they stand and prosper, Psal. xxxvii. 35, 36. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." They are long green before the sun, but at length they are suddenly smitten with an east-wind, and wither away; their lamp goes out with a stink, and they are put out in obscure darkness. Now, it is inconsistent with the benignity of the divine nature to forget the humble to raise them, while he minds the proud to abase them.

3*dly*, The word of God puts it beyond all peradventure, which, from the beginning to the end, is the humbled saint's security for a lifting up, Psal. cxix. 49, 50. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." His word is the great letter of his name, which he will certainly see to cause to shine, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. "For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;" and in all generations has been safely lippened to, Psal. xii. 6. Consider,

1. The doctrines of the word, which teach faith and hope for the time, and the happy issue the exercise of these graces will have. The whole current of scripture, to those in humbling circumstances, is, "Not to cast away their confidence, but to hope to the end;" and that for this good reason, that "it shall not be in vain." See Psal. xxvii. 14. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." And compare Rom. ix. 33. Is. xlix. 23. "For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

2. The promises of the word, whereby Heaven is expressly engaged for a lifting up to those that humble themselves in humbling circumstances. James iv. 10. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Matth. xxiii. 12. "And he

that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It may take a time to prepare them for lifting up, but that being done it is secured: Psal. x. 17. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." They have his word for deliverance, Psal. l. 15. And though they may seem to be forgotten, they shall not be always so; the time of their deliverance will come, Psal. ix. 18. "For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." Psal. cii. 17. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

3. The examples of the word sufficiently confirming the truth of the doctrines and promises, Rom. xv. 4. "For whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." In the doctrines and promises the lifting up is proposed to our faith, to be reckoned on the credit of God's word: but, in the examples, it is, in the case of others, set before our eyes to be seen, James v. 11. "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. There we see it in the case of Abraham, Job, David, Paul, and other saints; but, above all, in the case of the man Christ.

Lastly, The intercession of Christ, joining the prayers and cries of his humbled people in their humbling circumstances, insures a lifting up for them at length. Be it so, that the proud cry not when he bindeth them, yet his own humbled ones will not do so, they will cry, Psal. xlii. 7, 8. "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." And though unbelievers may soon be outwearied, and give it over for altogether, sure believers will not do so; but though they may, in a fit of temptation, lay it by as hopeless, they will find themselves obliged to take it up again, Jer. xx. 9. "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay;" and continue to cry on night and day, Luke xviii. 7. knowing no time for giving it over, till they be lifted up, Lam. iii. 49, 50. "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." Now Christ's intercession being joined with these cries, there cannot miss to be a lifting up. Consider,

1. Christ's intercession is certainly joined with the cries and prayers of the humbled in their humbling circumstances, Rev. viii. 3. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne." They are by the Spirit helped to groan for relief, Rom. viii. 26. and the prayers and groans which are through the Spirit, are certainly to be made effectual by the intercession of of the Son, James v. 16. And ye may know they are by the Spirit, if so be ye are helped to continue praying, hoping for your suit at last on the ground of God's word of promise; for nature's praying is a pool that will dry up in a long drought. It is the spirit of prayer is the lasting spring, John iv. 14. Psal. cxxxviii. 3. "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Truly there is an intercession in heaven, on the account of the humbling circumstances of the humble ones. "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?" Zech. i. 12. How then can they miss of a lifting up in due time?

2. He is in deep earnest in his intercession for his people in their humbling circumstances. Some will speak a good word in favour of the helpless, that will be little concerned whether they come speed or not: but our Intercessor is in earnest in behalf of his humbled ones; for he is touched with sympathy in their case, Is. xliii. 9. "In all their affliction he was afflicted"—a most tender sympathy, Zech. ii. 8.—"For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." He has their case upon his heart, where he is in the holy place in the highest heavens, Exod. xxviii. 29. and he keeps exact account of the time of their humbling circumstances, be it as long as it will, Zech. i. 12. Moreover, it is his own business, the lifting up they are to have is a thing that is secured to him, in the promises made to him on the account of his bloodshed for them, Psal. lxxxix. 33, 36. So not only are they looking on earth, but the man Christ is in heaven looking for the accomplishment of these promises, Heb. x. 12, 13. "But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from thenceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." How is it possible, then, that that looking should be baulked? Moreover, these humbling circumstances are his own sufferings still, though not in his person, yet in his members, Col. i. 24. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the affections of Christ in

my flesh, for his body's sake which is the church. Wherefore there is all ground to conclude he is in deep earnest.

Lastly, His intercession is always effectual, John xi. 42. "And I knew that thou hearest me always"—It cannot miss to be so, because he is the Father's well-beloved Son, his intercession has a plea of justice for the ground of it, 1 John ii. 1.—"We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Moreover, he has all power in heaven and earth lodged in him, John v. 22. and, finally, he and his Father are one, and their will one. So, for the present time, both Christ and his Father do will the lifting up of the humbled ones, but yet only in the due time.

SECONDLY, I proceed to a more particular view of the point. And,

I. We will consider the lifting up as brought about in time, which is the partial lifting up. And,

First, Some considerations for clearing the nature thereof.

1. This lifting up does not take place in every case of a child of God. One may be humbled in humbling circumstances, from which he is to get a lifting up in time. We would not from the promise presently conclude, that we, being humbled under our humbling circumstances, shall certainly be taken out of them, and freed from them ere we get to the end of our journey. For it is certain, there are some, such as our imperfections, and sinfulness, and mortality, we can by no means be rid of while in this world. And there are particular humbling circumstances the Lord may hang about one, and keep about him till they go down to the grave, while, in the mean time, he may lift up another from the same. Heman was pressed down all along from his youth, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. others all their life-time, Heb. ii. 15.

Objection. *If that be the case, what comes of the promise of lifting up? Where is the lifting up, if one may go to the grave under the weight? Ans.* Were there no life after this, there would be weight in that objection; but, since there is another life, there is none in it at all. In the other life the promise will be accomplished to the humbled, as it was, Luke xvi. 22. Consider, that the great term for accomplishing the promises, is the other life, not this. "These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them," Heb. xi. 13. And that whatever accomplishment of the promise is here, it is not of the nature of a stock, but of a sample or a pledge.

Question. *But then, may we not give over praying for the lifting up in that case? Ans.* We do not know when that is our case: for a case may be past all hope in our eyes, and the eyes of others, in

which God designs a lifting up in time, as in Job's, Job vii. 11. "What is my strength that I should hope? and what is mine end that I should prolong my life?" But, be it as it will, we should never give over praying for the lifting up, since it will certainly come to all that pray in faith for it; if not here, yet hereafter. The promise is sure, and that is the commandment: so such praying cannot miss of a happy issue at length, Psal. l. 15. "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." The whole life of a Christian is such a praying waiting life, to encourage whereunto all temporal deliverances are given as pledges, Rom. viii. 23. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." And whoso observes that full lifting up at death to be at hand, must certainly rise, if he has given over his case as hopeless.

2. However, there are some cases wherein this lifting up does take place. God gives his people some notable liftings up, even in time, raising them out of remarkable humbling circumstances. The storm is changed into a calm, and they remember it as waters that fail. Psal. xl. 1.—4. Two things may be observed on this.

(1.) One may be in humbling circumstances very long, and sore and hopeless, and yet a lifting up may be abiding them of a much longer continuance. This is sometimes the case of the children of God, who are set to bear the yoke in their youth, as it was with Joseph and David; and of them that get it laid on them in their middle age, as it was with Job, who could not be less than forty at his trouble's coming, but, after it, lived one hundred and forty, Job xlii. 16. God by such methods prepares men for peculiar usefulness.

(2.) One may be in humbling circumstances long and sore, and quite hopeless in the ordinary course of providence, yet they may get a clear and warm blink of a lifting up, ere they come to their journey's end. The life of some of God's children is like a cloudy and rainy day, wherein in the evening the sun breaks out from under the clouds, shines fair and clear a little, and then sets. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark—But it shall come to pass, that at evening-time it shall be light," Zech. xiv. 6, 7. Such was the case of Jacob in his old age, brought in honour and comfort to Egypt unto his son, and then died.

(3.) Yet whatever liftings up they get in this life, they will never want some weights hanging about them for their humbling. They may have their singing times, but their songs, while in this world, will be mixed with groanings, 2 Cor. v. 4. "For we that are

in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened."—The unmixed dispensation is reserved for the other world: but this will be a wilderness unto the end, where there will be howlings, with the most joyful notes.

Lastly, All the liftings up the humbled meet with now are pledges, and but pledges, samples, and earnest of the great lifting up abiding them on the other side; and they should look on them so.

(1.) They are really so, Hos. ii. 15. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt." Our Lord Jesus is leading his people now through the wilderness, and the manna and water of the rock are earnests for the time of the milk and honey flowing in the promised land. They are not yet come home to their Father's house: but they are travelling on the road, and Christ their elder brother with them, Cant. iv. 8. who bears their expenses, takes them into inns by the way, as it were, and refreshes them with partial liftings up, after which they must get to the road again. But that entertainment by the way is a pledge of the full entertainment he will afford them when come home.

Objection. *But people may get a lifting up in time, that yet is no pledge of a lifting up on the other side: how shall I know it then to be a pledge? Ans.* That lifting up, which comes by the promise, is certainly a pledge of the full lifting up in the other world: for, as the other life is the proper time of the accomplishing of the promises, so we may be sure, that when God once begins to clear his bond, he will certainly hold on till it is fully cleared. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," Psal. cxxxviii. 8. So we may say as Naomi to Ruth, upon her receiving the six measures of barley from Boaz, Ruth iii. 18. "He will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day." There are liftings up that come by common providence, and these indeed are single, and not pledges of more: but the promise chains mercies together, so that one got is a pledge of another to come, yea, of the whole chain to the end, 2 Sam. v. 12.

Question. *But how shall I know the lifting up to come by the way of the promise?* That which comes by the way of the promise, does at once come the low way of humiliation, the high way of faith, or believing the promise, and the long way of waiting hope and patient continuance, James v. 7. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Humility qualifies for the accom-

plishment of the promise, faith sucks the breast of it, and patient waiting hangs by the breast till the milk come abundantly.

(2.) But no lifting up of God's children here are any more than pledges of lifting up. God gives worldly men their stock here, but his children get nothing but a sample of theirs here, Psal. xvii. 14; even as the servant at the term gets his fee in a round sum, while the young heir gets nothing but a few pence for spending-money. The truth is, the same spending-money is more valuable than the world's stock, Psal iv. 7. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." But though it is better than that and their services too, and more worth than all their on-waiting, yet it is below the honour of their God to put them off with it, Heb. xi. 16. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

Secondly, The partial lifting up itself. What they will get, getting this lifting up promised to the humbled. Why, they will get,

1. A removal of their humbling circumstances. God having tried them a while, and humbled them, and brought down their hearts, will at length take off their burden, remove the weight so long hung at them, and so take them off that part of their trial joyfully, and let them get up their back long bowed down: and this one of two ways.

(1.) Either in kind, removing the burden for good and all. Such a lifting Job got, when the Lord turned back his captivity, increased again his family and substance, which had both been disolated. David, when Saul his persecutor fell in battle, and he was brought to the kingdom after many weary days expecting one day to fall by his hand. It is easy with our God to make such turns in the most humbling circumstances.

(2.) Or in equivalent, or as good, removing the weight of the burden, that though it remains, it presses them no more, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities."—Though they are not got to the shore, yet their head is no more under the water, but lifted up. David speaks feelingly of such a lifting up, Psal. xxvii. 5, 6. "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me, in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy, I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto

the Lord." Such had the three children in the fiery furnace; the fire burned, but it could burn nothing of them but their bonds: they had the warmth and light of it, but nothing of the scorching heat. Sometimes God lifts up his people this way in their humbling circumstances.

2. A comfortable sight of the acceptance of their prayers, put up in their humbling circumstances. While prayers are not answered, but trouble continued, the hangers on about the Lord's hand are apt to think they are not accepted nor regarded in heaven, because there is no alteration in their case, John ix. 16, 17. "If I had called, and he had answered me, yea would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice; for he breaketh me with a tempest."—But that is a mistake; they are accepted immediately, though not answered, 1 John v. 14. "And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." The Lord does with them as a father with the letters coming thick from his son abroad, reads them one by one with pleasure, and carefully lays them up to be answered at his convenience. And when the answer comes, the son will know how acceptable they were to his father, Matt. xv. 28. So, &c.

3. A heart-satisfying answer of these prayers, *ibid.* so as they shall not only get the thing, but see they have it as an answer of prayer; and they will put a double value on the mercy, 1 Sam. ii. 1. Accepted prayers may be very long of answering, many years, as in Abraham and David's case, but they cannot miscarry of an answer at length, Psal. ix. 18. The time will come when God will tell out to them according to the promise, that they shall change their note, and say, Psal. cxvi. 1. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication." Looking on their lifting up as bearing the signature of the hand of a prayer-hearing God.

4. Full satisfaction, as to the conduct of providence, in all the steps of the humbling circumstances, and the delay of the lifting up, however perplexing these were before, Rev. xv. 3. Standing on the shore, and looking back to what they have passed through, they will be made to say, "He hath done all things well." These things which are bitter to Christians in the passing through, are very sweet in the reflection on them: so is Samson's riddle verified in their experience.

5. They get the lifting up, together with the interest for the time they lay out of it. When God pays his bonds of promises, he pays both stock and interest together: the mercy is increased according to the time the man waited on, and the expenses and hardships sus-

tained during the dependence of the process. The fruits of common providence are soon ripe, soon rotten: but the fruit of the promise is readily long a ripening, but then it is durable: and the longer it is a ripening, it is the more valuable when it comes. Abraham and Sarah waited for the promise about ten years, at length they thought on a way to hasten it, Gen. xvi. that soon took in the birth of Ishmael, but he was not the promised son. They were coming into extreme old age ere the promise brought forth, Gen. xviii. 11. But, when it came, they got it with an addition, the renewing of their ages, Gen. xxi. 7. and xxv. 1. The most valuable of all the promises was the longest in fulfilling, *viz.* the promise of Christ, that was four thousand years.

Lastly, The spiritual enemies that flew thick and throng about them in the time of the darkness of the humbling circumstances, will be scattered at this lifting up in the promise, 1 Sam. ii. 1, 5. "And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord,—my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased." Formidable was Pharaoh's host behind the Israelites, while they had the Red-sea before them; but, when they were through the sea, they saw the Egyptians dead on the shore, Exod. xiv. 30. Such a sight will they that humble themselves under humbling circumstances get of their spiritual enemies, when the time comes for their lifting up.

Thirdly, The due time of this lifting up. That is a natural question of those in humbling circumstances, "Watchman, what of the night?" And we cannot answer it to the humbled soul but in the general, Isa. xxi. 11, 12. So take these general observations on it.

1. The lifting up of the humbled will not be longsome, considering the weight of the matter; that is to say, considering the worth and value of the lifting up of the humble; when it comes it can by no means be reckoned long to the time of it. When ye sow your corns in the fields, though they do not ripen so soon as some garden-seeds, but you wait three months or so, ye do not think the harvest long a-coming, considering the value of the crop. This view the apostle takes of the lifting up in humbling circumstances, 2 Cor. iv. 17. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." So that a believer looking on the promise with an eye of faith, and perceiving its accomplishment, and the work of it when accomplished, may wonder it is come on so short on-waiting. Therefore it is determined to be a time that comes soon, Luke xviii. 7. soon in respect of its weight and worth.

2. When the time comes, it and only it will appear the due time. To every thing there is a season, and a great part of wisdom lies in discerning it, and doing things in the season thereof. And we may be sure infinite wisdom cannot miss the season by mistaking it, Deut xxxii. 4. "He is a rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment." But whatever God doth will abide the strictest examination in that as at all other points, Eccles. iii. 14. "I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doth it, that men should fear before him." It is true, many times cast up to us as the due time for lifting up, which yet really is not so, because there is some circumstance hid to us, which renders that season unfit for the thing. Hence, John vii. 6. "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready." But when all the circumstances, always foreknown of God, shall come to be unfolded, and laid together before us, we will then see the lifting up is in the nick of time, most for the honour of God and our good, and that it would not have done so well sooner.

3. When the time comes that is really the due time, the proper time for lifting up a child of God from his humbling circumstances, it will not be put off one moment longer, Hab. ii. 3. "At the end it shall speak—it will surely come, it will not tarry." Though it tarry, it will not linger or put off to another time. O what rest of heart would the firm faith of this afford us! There is not a child of God but would with the utmost carefulness protest against a lifting up before the due time, as against an unripe fruit casten to him by an angry father, that would set his teeth on edge. Sith it is so then, could we firmly believe this point, that it will undoubtedly come in the due time, without losing of a minute, it will afford a sound rest. It must be so, because God has said it: were the case never so hopeless, were mountains of difficulties lying in the way of it, at the appointed time it will *blow*, *Heb.* Hab. ii. 3. A metaphor from the wind rising in a moment after a dead calm.

4. The humbling circumstances are ordinarily carried to the utmost point of hopelessness before the lifting up. The knife was at Isaac's throat before the voice was heard. 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." Things soon seem to us arrived at that point: such is the hastiness of our spirits. But things may

have far to go down, after we think they are at the foot of the hill. And we are almost as little competent judges of the point of hopelessness, as of the due time of lifting up. But readily God carries his people's humbling circumstances downward, downward, still downward till they come to that point. Two reasons hereof to be noticed.

(1.) One from the explanatory cause of it. Herein God is holding the same course which he held in the case of the man Christ, the beloved pattern copied after in all the dispensations of providence towards the church, and every particular believer, Rom. viii. 29. He was all along a man of sorrows: as his time went on, the waters swelled more, till he was brought to the dust of death; then he was buried, and the grave-stone sealed; which done, the world thought they were freely quit of him, and he would trouble them no more. But they quite mistook it; then, and not till then, was the due time of lifting him up. And the liftings up that his people get most remarkable, are only little pieces fashioned after this grand pattern.

(2.) Another from the final cause, the end and design providence aims at in it, and that is to carry the believer cleanly off his own entirely, and all created bottoms, to bottom his trust and hope in the Lord alone, 2 Cor. i. 9. "That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." The life of a Christian here is designed to be a life of faith: and though faith may act more easily, that it has some help from sense, yet it certainly acts most nobly, when it acts over the belly of sense. Then is it pure faith, when it stands only on its own native legs, the power and word of God, Rom. iv. 19, 20. "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead—neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God:" and thus it must do, when the matter is carried to the utmost point of hopelessness.

Lastly, Due preparation of the heart, for the lifting up out of the humbling circumstances, goes before the due time of that lifting up according to the promise. It is not so in every lifting up: the liftings up of the common providences are not so critically managed; men will have them, will want them no longer, and God flings them to them in anger, ere they are prepared for them, Hos. xiii. 11. "I gave thee a king in mine anger." They can by no means abide the trial, and God takes them off as reprobate silver that is not able to abide it, Jer. vi. 29, 30.

This due preparation consists in due humiliation, Psal. x. 17.

And it often takes much work to bring about this, which is another point that we are very incompetent judges of. We would have thought Job was brought very low in his spirit, by the providence of God bruising him on the one hand, and his friends on the other for a long time. Yet, after all he had endured both ways, God saw it necessary to speak to him himself, for his humiliation, chap. xxxviii. 1. By that speech of God himself he was brought to his knees, chap. xl. 4, 5. "And we would have thought he was then sufficiently humbled, and perhaps he thought so himself too. But God saw a farther degree of humiliation necessary, and therefore just begins anew again to speak for his humiliation, which at length laid him in the dust, chap. xlii. 5, 6. And when he was thus prepared for lifting up, he got it.

There are six things, I conceive, belong to this humiliation, preparatory to lifting up.

1. A deep sense of sinfulness and unworthiness of being lifted up at all, Job xl. 4. "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." People may be long in humbling circumstances ere they be brought this length: even good men are prejudiced in their own favours, and may so far forget themselves as to think God deals his favours unequally, and is mighty severe on them more than others. Elihu marketh this wrong in Job under his humbling circumstances, Job xxxiii. 10, 11, 12. And I believe it will be found there is readily a greater keenness to vindicate our own honour from the imputation the humbling circumstances seem to lay upon it, than to vindicate the honour of God in the justice and equity of the dispensation. The blindness of an ill-natured world, still ready to suspect the worst causes for humbling circumstances, as if the greatest sufferers were surely the greatest sinners, Luke xiii. 4. gives a handle for this bias of the corrupt nature. But God is a jealous God, and when he appears sufficiently to humble, he will cause the matter of our honour give way, like a sandy brae under our feet, while we shall be obliged to *gripe hastily* to the vindication of his.

2. A resignation to the divine pleasure as to the time of lifting up. God gives the promise, leaving the time blank as to us. Our time is always ready, and we rashly fill it up at our own hand. God does not keep our time, because it is not the due time. Hence we are ready to think his word fails; whereas it is but our own rash conclusion from it that fails, Psal. cxvi. 11. "I said in my haste, All men are liars." Several of the saints have gotten on the fingerends by this means, and thereby learned to let alone filling up that

blank. The first promise was thus used by believing Eve, Gen. iv. 1. Another promise was so by believing Abraham, after about ten years on-waiting, Gen. xvi. Another by David, forecited, Psal. cxvi. 11.

If this be the case of any child of God, let them not be discouraged upon it, thinking they were over-rash in applying the promise to themselves: they were only so in applying the time to the promise; a snapper that saints in all ages have made, which they repented, and saw the folly of, and let alone that point for the time to come; and then the promise was fulfilled in its own due time. Let them in such circumstances go and do likewise, leaving the time entirely to the Lord.

3. An entire resignation as to the way and manner of bringing it about. We are ready to do, as to the way of accomplishing the promise, just as with the time of it, to set a particular way for the Lord's working of it; and if that be not kept, the proud heart is stumbled, 2 Kings v. 11. "But Naaman was wroth, and he went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place."—But the Lord will have his people broke off from that too, that they shall prescribe no way to him, but leave that to him entirely, as in that same case, verse 14.—"He went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God—and he was clean." The compass of our knowledge of ways and means is very narrow, as if one is blocked up, oft-times we cannot see another: but our God knows many ways of relief, where we know but one, or none at all; and it is very usual for the Lord to bring the lifting up to his people in a way they had no view to, after repeated disappointments from these airths whence they had great expectation.

4. Resignation as to the degree of the lifting up, yea, and as to the very being of it in time. The Lord will have his people weaned so, that however hasty they have sometimes been, that they behoved to be so soon lifted up, and could no longer bear, they shall be brought at length to set no time at all, but submit to go to the grave under their weight, if it seem good in the Lord's eyes, and in that case they will be brought to be content with any measure of it in time, without prescribing how much, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.—"If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again.—But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

5. The continuing of praying and waiting on the Lord in the

case, Eph. vi. 18. "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."—It is pride of heart, and unsubduedness of spirit, that makes people give over praying and waiting, because their humbling circumstances are lengthened out time after time, 2 Kings vi. 33. But due humility, going before the lifting up, brings men into that temper, to pray, wait, and hang on resolutely, setting no time for the giving it over, till the lifting up come, whether in time or eternity, Lam. iii. 49, 50.

Lastly, Mourning under mismanagements in the trial, Job xlii. 3.—"Therefore have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." The proud heart dwells and expatiates on the man's sufferings in the trial, and casts out all the folds of the trial on that side, and views them again and again. But when the Spirit of God comes duly to humble, in order to lifting up, he will cause the man to pass, in a sort, the suffering-side of the trial, and turn his eyes on his own conduct in it, ransack it, judge himself impartially, and condemn himself; so that his mouth will be stopped.

This is that humility going before the lifting up in time in the way of the promise.

II. We proceed to consider the lifting up, as brought about at the end of time, in the other world. And,

First, A word as to the nature of this lifting up. Concerning it we shall say these five things.

1. There is a certainty of this lifting up, in all cases of those humbled under humbling circumstances. Though one cannot, in every case, make them sure of a lifting up in time, yet they may be assured, be the case what it will, they will, without all peradventure, get a lifting up on the other side, 2 Cor. v. 1. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Though God's humbled children may both breakfast and dine on bread of adversity and water of affliction, they will be sure to sup sweetly and plentifully. And the believing expectation of the latter might serve to qualify the former, and make easy under it.

2. It will be a perfect lifting up, Heb. xii. 23. They will be perfectly delivered out of their particular trials, and special furnace, be what it will, that made them many a weary day. Lazarus was then delivered from his poverty and sores, and lying at the rich man's gate, Luke xvi. 22. and fully delivered. Yea, they will get

then a lifting up from all their humbling circumstances together. All the imperfections will then be at an end, inferiority in relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainty, and sin. If it was long a coming, there will be a blessed moment when they shall get altogether.

3. They will not only be raised out of their low condition, but they will be set up on high; as Joseph, not only brought out of prison, but made ruler over the land of Egypt. And they will be lifted up,

(1.) Into a high place, Luke xvi. 22.—"The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."—Now they are at best in a low place, but upon this earth; there they will be seated in the highest heavens, Philip. i. 23. with Eph. vi. 10. Often, in their humbling circumstances, they are obliged now to embrace dunghills; then they will be set with Christ on his throne, Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne."—Though their belly now cleaves to the earth, and men say, Bow down that we may pass over you, they will then be settled in the heavenly mansions, above sun, moon, and stars.

(2.) Into a high state and condition, a state of perfection. Out of all their troubles and uneasinesses, they will be set into a state of rest; from their mean and inglorious condition, they will be advanced into a state of glory; their weighted and sorrowful life will be succeeded with a fulness of joy; and, for their humbling circumstances, they will be clothed with eternal glory and honour.

4. It will be a final lifting up, after which there will be no more casting down for ever, Rev. vii. 16. When we get a lifting up in time, we are apt to imagine fondly we are at the end of our trials; but we soon find we are too hasty in our conclusions, and the cloud returns, Psal. xxx. 6, 7.—"In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.—Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." But then indeed the trial is quite over, the fight is at an end: and then is the time of the retribution and triumph.

Lastly, There will not be the least remaining uneasiness from the humbling circumstances, but, on the contrary, they will have a glorious and desirable effect. I make no question but the saints will have the remembrance of their humbling circumstances they were under here below. Did the rich man in hell remember his having five brethren on the earth, how sumptuously he fared, how Lazarus sat at his gate; and can we doubt but the saints will remember perfectly their heavy trials? Rev. vi. 10. But then they will remember them as waters that fail, as the man recovered to health

remembers his tossings on the sick bed; and that is a way of remembering that sweetens the present state of health beyond what otherwise it would be. Certainly the shore of the Red sea was the place that, of all places, was the fittest to help the Israelites to sing in the highest key, Rev. xv. 3. And the humbling circumstances of saints on earth, will be of the same use to them in heaven.

Secondly, A word to the due time of this lifting up. There is a particular definite time for it in every saint's case, which is the due time, but it is hid from us. We can only say in the general,

1. Then is the due time for it, when our work we have to do in this world is over. God has appointed every one their task, fight, trial, and work; and, till that is done, we are in a sort immortal, John ix. 4. and xi. 9. That work is,

(1.) Doing work; work set to us by the great Master, to be done for the honour of God and the good of our fellow creatures, Eccles. ix. 10. We must be content to be doing on, even in our humbling circumstances, till that be done out. It is not the due time for that lifting up, till we are at the end of that work, and so have served our generation.

(2.) Suffering work. There is a certain portion of suffering that is allotted for the mystical body, and the head has divided to the several members of the proportions thereof; and it is not the due time for that lifting up, till we have exhausted the share thereof allotted to us. Paul looked on his life as a going on in that, Col. i. 24.

2. When that lifting up comes, we will see it is come exactly in the due time; that it was well it was neither sooner nor later: for, though heaven is always better than earth, and that it would be better for us, absolutely speaking, to be in heaven than on earth; yet certainly there is a time wherein it is better for the honour of God, and his service, that we be on the earth than in heaven: Philip. i. 24. "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." And it will be no grief of heart to them, when there, that they were so long in their humbling circumstances, and were not brought sooner.

USE 1. Let not then the humble cast away their confidence, whatever their humbling circumstances be: let them assure themselves there will come a lifting up to them at length; if not here, yet to be sure hereafter. Let them keep this in their view, and comfort themselves with it, for God has said it, Psal. ix. 18. "The needy shall not always be forgotten." If the night were never so long, the morning will come at length.

2. Let patience have her perfect work. The husbandman waits for the return of his seed, the sea-merchant for the return of his ships, the store-master for what he calls year-time, when he draws in the produce of his flocks. All these have long patience, and why should not the Christian too have patience, and patiently wait the time appointed for his lifting up?

Ye have heard much of the *crook* in the *lot*, the excellency of humbleness of spirit in a low lot, beyond pride of spirit, though joined with a high one: ye have been called to humble yourselves in your humbling circumstances, and assured in that case of a lifting up. To conclude, we may assure ourselves, *God will at length break in pieces the proud, be they never so high; and he will triumphantly lift up the humble, be they never so low.*

THE

UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST,

AND THE DUTIES

THE MEMBERS OWE ONE TO ANOTHER.

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL SERMONS

PREACHED ON

1 Cor. x. 17.

For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

One great reason why communions do so little good, is, that communicants are so little concerned in one another for their spiritual welfare. And this hath its rise from their not discerning, and seriously laying to heart the spiritual relation there is among them, by them avouched and publicly testified by their partaking of one bread at the communion-table. People readily have some notion that it is a communion with Christ; but few consider that it is a communion of saints, and what duties flow from it as such. I would therefore lay this matter before you, in order to pursue the benefit of our late solemn occasion.

The scope of these words is to show, That those who partaked of idolatrous feasts were by that action declared one body with idolaters. This is proven by a parity of reason, viz. that those who partake of the Lord's table declare themselves one body with the saints. In the preceding verse he shews the nature of the sacrament of the supper; it is the *communion of the body and blood of Christ;* a sign, seal, and appointed means of our joint feeding on a slain Saviour, like so many eagles on the slain body. Here he shows the nature of the society of saints, for whom it is appointed, viz. that they are one body, viz. the body of Christ; and therefore being united to him, they have certainly communion in his body and

blood. *For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*

In the words are two things.

1. The spiritual conjunction and communion of saints among themselves asserted; *We, many, &c.* He speaks of the whole multitude of believers. They being many particular saints, some men, some women, teachers, taught, weak, strong, are yet so joined, and have such intimate union and communion one with another, that they are one bread, *i. e.* one body represented by the one sacramental bread. If ye ask whose is that body? or who is the head of it? It is Christ's 1 Cor. xii. 27. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Not his natural body, but his mystical body: and therefore the many are not such as meet at one communion-table in one congregation, but all the members of Christ's mystical body through the world, for Christ has but one body: and as many grains do make up but one sacramental bread, so they being many do make up but one body.

2. This spiritual conjunction and communion of saints among themselves, inferred from their all pertaking of that one bread; *For we being many are one bread, &c.* By that one bread is meant, that bread which is exhibited in the sacrament, viz. both the invisible bread, which is Christ himself, and the visible bread which we take into our mouths, the latter the sign of the former. Believing communicants partake of both: they partake of that bread, which is the Lord; so are all united to, and hold communion with the head as members, and therefore are one body among themselves: they partake of the sacramental bread, which is an instituted sign of the other, and thereby profess their communion with Christ the head, and consequently their communion with the saints, as members of the same body with them. And in this last, hypocritical communicants join with them, by their partaking, declaring, and avouching themselves to be of the communion of saints of the mystical body of Christ, and binding themselves to the duty of that communion; although in reality they are not so, as not partaking of the invisible bread, which is Christ the Lord. The case is the same as to baptism. "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." 1 Cor. xii. 13.

The point to be handled is this *doctrine.*

DOCT. *There is a communion of saints among themselves, as being conjoined into one mystical body of Christ, declared and avouched by partakers of the sacraments, especially that of the Lord's supper, every one for themselves.*

There are two parts of this *doctrine.* One is, That there is such a

strait and intimate communion and conjunction among the saints, that they are really and truly one body mystically, however many they be. The other is, That one's partaking of the sacrament is a declaring and avouching himself to be of that communion. By a communion I mean a society having a common interest in things.

I. I shall enquire into the nature of the communion of saints as one body. And,

1. Who are the members of this communion—of this happy society the body of Christ? There are two sorts of members of it, some in shew only, some in reality. As to the former I offer two things.

(1.) The openly wicked and profane, amongst whom must be reckoned the grossly ignorant, and all such as have no form of godliness, are not so much as visible or apparent members of the communion of saints. They are excluded from the communion of the the saints above, Gal. v. 19—21. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest—adultery, fornication, &c.—of which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." From the communion of saints below, Acts xxvi. 18. "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light—that they may receive inheritance among them that are sanctified"—and visibly belong to the devil's family, John viii. 44. What though they have been baptized, and are yet in the visible church, they have in effect renounced it, Rom. ii. 25. "But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." For though they were baptized into this one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13. yet they will have no communion with that body, nor the head of it. Though they got on Christ's mark of baptism in their infancy, they have now got the devil's mark on above it. So Rom. ii. 25. therefore not to be admitted to the Lord's table, Matth. vii. 6. "Give not that which is holy unto dogs."

(2.) Masked hypocrites are seeming visible members of this communion, but not real members of it. They are brethren of the saints, but only half brothers, Can. i. 6. false brethren, Gal. ii. 4. They are among them, and communicate among them, but they are not of them, 1 John ii. 19. They want the wedding-garment; and though the servants cannot but admit them as visible saints, the Master will throw them out, as none of that communion in his sight, Matth. xxii. 12.

Hypocrites belong to the mystical body, as a branch bound up, but not knitting with the stock belongs to the tree, or as a tree-leg belongs to the body; but not otherwise. See the case of these members in these three things.

1. They are useful for the mystical body of Christ with their gifts as the tree-leg with its strength to the natural body. So was Judas and Damas, &c. Graceless well-gifted ministers and professors, they may have a mouth to speak for truth, ay and hands to act for it too, and the profit redound to the saints, not themselves, who have no heart to embrace it in reality; and to adorn the communion as long as they keep green, as such branches do the tree, by which God is honoured before the world, Psal, lxxxi. 15.

They are under the particular care of the body, as the tree-leg—and the branch under the gardener's inspection. Hence they get their gifts increased for the good of the body, are preserved from many snares they would otherways fall into if they had nothing at all to do with the communion of saints, as may appear from the way they go when they turn apostates. They fare the better they are in good company. But,

3. They are laid aside at length, as the branch, John xv. 2. and the tree-leg, if not before, yet at the time when the body goes to rest, Psal. cxxv. 5. Though the living leg be broken, so crazed that for the time it can be of no discernible use for the head, nor for the other members of the body, it is not cast by, nor separate from the body, but its weakness borne with, and it healed at length. But the tree-leg goes for altogether.

As to the latter, there are three sorts of these real members.

1. Real members in God's design, but not yet formed. These are all the elect, who are yet to be born, or yet to be born again, and we cannot have a full view of the body without eying them, Eph. i. 10. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ.—They shall all of them be formed at length, all conjoined unto the body, and they all belong to the perfection of the body, for carrying on of which the ministry is appointed, Eph. iv. 11—13. For the body of Christ is all the elect knit to him as the head, Eph. v. 23. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church."—

2. Real members already perfected, at least as to their souls. These are the saints triumphant, who are with us members, fellow-members of the body of Christ, though glorified ones. Therefore, Heb. xii. 22, 23. "But you are come—to the general assembly and church of the first-born—and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Even they, as high as they are, are of this communion of saints, of the same family of heaven with us militant on earth, though they are in the upper rooms, and we in the lower, Eph. iii. 15.

3. Real members formed, but not perfected yet. These are the

saints on earth, even all of them upon the face of the earth, whatever particular visible church they belong to: at whatever distance they are one from another, though they never saw, nor never will see one another's face till they come to meet in glory, they are all one body, all members of that one body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 12. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members, being many are one body, so also in Christ."

These last are they whom our text speaks of, as one body partaking of the sacramental bread, viz. the body of Christ, as to that part of it which is on earth; and of this we speak. So there is a communion of saints on earth, and all the saints are members of it: wherever they dwell, whatever lesser points of doctrine, worship, &c. they differ in, they have communion with one another, as being all conjoined into one body.

II. Wherein this communion of saints consists; or how they are one body.

1. they have all one head, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of all the saints, Eph. i. 22. 23.—"And gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body."—They are all united to him by his Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17.—"He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." And from him as their head, they derive vital influences, Col. ii. 19. "From which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." There may be great difference betwixt members, in respect of growth, liveliness, and usefulness; but the meanest have communion with the highest in one head, which is common to them all. So they are all under the direction, government and influence of Jesus Christ, as their common head.

2. They are all animated, enlivened and actuated by one Spirit, *viz.* the Holy Spirit of Christ. This Spirit dwells in Christ as the head, and in all the saints as his members, Rom. viii. 9. and unites them to the head, and among themselves too, so that they are one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13. A tree-leg, though bound close to the body, is no member of it, because it is not animated by the soul and life of that body; but if there were a body of a man, whose head did reach the clouds, any toe of that man's foot, though defiled by the ground it toucheth, is as really a member of that body as the shoulders are, having communion with them in the same soul or spirit, which actuates the one as well as the other.

Great is the difference of the saint's souls or spirits, as men and women; some are bold, some fearful. It is as easy for some to draw the sword in Christ's quarrel, as for others to speak a word for him. Some are of clear, cheerful, easy, active spirits; some un-

der a spirit of heaviness and indisposition for action; but as saints they have all one Spirit: whoso could discern, how unanimously they vote Christ to be king of the heart, of the church, of the world, against the torrent of solicitations from the devil, world, and flesh; how, as with one eye, they look up to God in Christ as their only happiness, and away from the world which the rest of mankind fix their eye on; how with one heart and one soul they all groan under the remains of sin, and for perfection in holiness, though some louder than others; he behoved to say, these have all one Spirit of faith, holiness, and contempt of the world, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Numb. xiv. 24.

3. One grace of faith wrought by the self-same Spirit in them all, Col. ii. 12. terminates in and knits them to one head, the Lord Jesus, Eph. iii. 17. As all the lines drawn from the circumference meet in the centre, and there have communion; so the faith of all God's elect meet in Jesus Christ, and thus they have communion among themselves, Tit. i. 1.—4. Thus are they one body, as being all knit to the head, by one and the same spiritual band for kind. The strong faith gripes here, the weak faith reacheth to him; though the weak hand of faith is not so steady, nor gripes so hard as the other, yet both knit, Cant. iv. 9. and v. 1.

4. They have all one heart and one mind in respect of fundamentals, Eph. iv. 5. One faith, *viz.* of doctrine, the substance of which was and ever will be the same, Heb. xiii. 8. Whatever be their different sentiments as to inferior truths, they all agree in the main, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Thus, according to the promise, Jer. xxxii. 39. they have "one heart and one way;" for they are all partakers of that one unction which teacheth all things necessary to salvation, 1 John ii. 20. "But ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things." For they are all taught of God: and that doctrine which contradicts the experience of the saints, and relishes not with discerning souls exercised to godliness, is justly to be suspected, Matth. xi. 19.—"Wisdom is justified of her children."

5. They are united to one another in love, Col. iii. 14. Eph. iv. 16. This is a powerful cement. Love cements hearts and souls, and so knits fast. They love one another, though they never saw other's faces, if they do but know there are such persons in the world. They love them for the common image of God which they bear; and in all the company of saints this love will break over all the differences in lesser matters among them; so that it is made a mark of a member of that communion, 1 John iii. 14. "We know

that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

Lastly, They have a communion in one another's gifts and graces, as the case stands in the natural body, Eph. iv. 16. There is a diversity of gifts and offices in the common body of saints; some are teachers, some taught; rulers, ruled. Some excel in one gift or grace, some in another: some perhaps cannot be said to excel their fellow-saints in any thing: but all these are for the common advantage of the body, 1 Cor. xii. 27. and the glory of the head. And, wherever they are, they belong to the whole body, as the light that is in the eye, the strength in the arms, the swiftness in the legs, belong to, and are for the good of the whole body. 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's." And every the meanest member and gift has its own use and necessity. See 1 Cor. xii. 13. and downwards.

USE. Here is a fellowship ye may all partake of, and I invite you all to the communion of saints, 1 John i. 3. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may also have fellowship with us." Many are ruined with their love of that they call good-fellowship. What is the fellowship deserves that name? Not the communion of sinners ruining one another under the influence of Satan and their lusts; not the fellowship of drunkards and revellers, whose common profit and pleasure goes away *like the crackling of thorns*—only it leaves a stink behind; not the fellowship of the men of the world, in advancing some temporal gain; but the communion of saints, the pleasantest, richest, best fellowship in all the world. O! leave the communion of sinners for this; come out from among them, and be ye separate, joining yourselves to this communion.

III. The properties of this communion.

1. It is a most honourable communion, for it is a communion with the holy Trinity, 1 John i. 3. "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And,

(1.) The Father is the Head and Father of the communion, Eph. iv. 6. 1 Cor. xi. 3. He is Father Creator of all men, Acts xvii. 29. But of the communion of saints he is Father by a special, gracious, saving relation. So that they are all his children, John i. 12. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. And they have communion with him, and union through the Lord Jesus Christ, since he and the Father are one.

(2.) The centre of this communion is the Son, the blessed Mediator. In him all meet, 1 Cor. xi. 3. The saints meet in Christ as their head, and in him the Father meets with them, 2 Cor. v. 19.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Christ presents all believers through the world unto his Father, saying, "Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me," Heb. ii. 13. So, being the Mediator's, they become his, John xx. 17. In this respect Christ is called the way to the Father, John xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

(3.) The Holy Spirit is the internal original bond of this communion, knitting all the members to Christ, and among themselves, Eph. iv. 4. He brings them together into Christ, and to his Father, fixes and holds them there by his infinite power, that they can never be broken off again. So believers, members of this communion, have communion with the Father and the Son, 1 John i. 3. and the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

2. It is a most rich communion. There are societies and companies this day joining stocks together, to advance worldly wealth; but the richest of them have nothing but trifles in comparison with the company or communion of saints. The communion of saints is the company trading to heaven, and their wealth is past reckoning. For a view of it, consider only these two things.

(3.) They have communion with Christ, a common interest with him who is Heir of all things, so that they may set their name under his, on all that is his. They have communion with him in his perfect righteousness, Is. xlv. 24. Hence they are all fair, Cant. iv. 7. clear as the sun, Cant. vi. 10. In his active obedience, so that they have obeyed in Christ, as they sinned in Adam, Rom. viii. 3, 4. In his sufferings and death, Gal. ii. 20. In his resurrection and ascension, Eph. ii. 6. and glory. Compare Heb. vi. 20. They have a common interest in all his purchase, and, as poor as some of them sit, they want nothing, but are complete, Col. ii. 10. "And ye are complete in him."

They have a real participation of Christ himself, Heb. iii. 14. Of his death and his resurrection, Rom. vi. 4, 5. Of his Spirit, Phil. ii. 1. Of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Of his offices; they are prophets, Psal. cv. 15; priests and kings, Rev. i. 6. And of his fulness, John i. 16.

(2.) They have communion with God; for so runs the covenant, "I will be your God." And Psal. cxliv. 15. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is theirs. All his attributes are theirs; the power of God to protect them, the wisdom of God to guide them, &c. and with him all things, since all is his, and he is theirs, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

Behold the riches of this company. And, (1.) None of the saints

bring any thing with them to put into the stock: but they are admitted freely. (2.) Not only is a part for every one, but each one has all; and so it may be, since the stock is infinite.

3. It is a most extensive communion. And it extends,

(1.) Over the earth; and so is called the Catholic or universal church, 1 Cor. i. 2. Though vast tracks of land and huge seas interpose betwixt them; though they have different languages, so that some of them cannot understand what others say, and their customs are very different; yet none of all these prevent their being members of one and the same body.

(2.) To the heavens. The saints above belong to the communion of saints, Heb. xii. 23. Ay, and the holy angels too, in the same sense, ver. 22; for the head of the saints is the head of angels too, Col. ii. 10.

Lastly, It is a holy communion. It is a fellowship of saints, Eph. ii. 19. "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and household of God." The head, centre, and bond, and members of this communion, are all holy. They are a society set apart for God, drawn out of the world lying in wickedness, walking in the way of holiness with displayed banners towards the holy land.

SECONDLY, That one's partaking of the sacrament is a declaring and avouching himself to be of that communion. By partaking of baptism we have all done it once; and by the Lord's supper it is done as oft as we communicate in it. By the former in our infancy, it is done with our virtual consent; by the latter with our express consent. This point will be clear, if we consider the relation the sacrament has to the communion of saints.

1. It is a sign and badge of the communion of saints. *We are one bread*, says the text. The one bread signifying, that we are one body; and by receiving the sign, and wearing the badge of the society, we declare two things, according to the nature of a distinguishing sign.

(1.) That we are no more of the communion of the world lying in wickedness, which is the opposite society, 1 Cor. x. 21. "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils." That we have left our Father's house and people, and are no more to share with them in their way and manner of life. It is the putting on the sign of Zion's King, that we may be distinguished from those that belong to the enemy.

(2.) That we are henceforth of the communion of saints, and not neutrals, Rev. xiv. 1. That we have joined ourselves to that blessed society of saints, the head of which is Jesus Christ, to take part

with them for better and worse. We have said to them, as Ruth to Naomi, Ruth i. 16. "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

2. It is a seal of the communion of saints, and seals it effectually to all those that do sincerely take hold of the covenant, Rom. iv. 11. The righteousness of faith is the possession of the society of saints, and the sacrament sealing that to a man, seals his being of that communion. A believer may be sore pressed with that question, *How shall I put thee among the children?* But the sacrament, to put it out of doubt, seals and confirms his being put among them. Their being one body, is sealed by their partaking of one bread. So 1 Cor. xii. 13.

3. The sacraments are the external bonds of this communion, whereby they are visibly embodied into one select society, 1 Cor. xii. 13. And hence it is that the uncircumcised under the Old Testament were to be cut off from their people. The church of God makes a visible society in the world: and it is not the hearing of the word that is the bond of it, for that is left common to any who will; but the sacraments, which are not to be given but to visible believers.

4. It is an engagement to the duties of this communion of saints. "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism," Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Whosoever is embodied into a regular society, by his entering into it, is obliged to walk by the rules of it. And so the sacrament is an engagement or oath to walk by the rules of holiness, which are the rules of the communion of saints.

Now, whosoever does receive the public sign, seal, bond, and engagements of a society, does thereby publicly declare and avouch himself to be of that society: but, by partaking of the sacrament, the partakers do take on the public sign—of the communion of saints: therefore, &c.

Use. I draw some practical inferences from this doctrine.

I. There is a very near and special particular relation amongst the partakers of the sacraments, visibly constitute by their joint partaking of them. They do thereby declare themselves to be of one body, the head whereof is Jesus Christ: even baptism alone constitutes this special relation, 1 Cor. xii. 13; for by that holy

sign, the baptized are distinguished from those without the visible church, and have all given up their names to Christ. Much more does the receiving of the Lord's supper also, as saith the text.

As for the invisible real members of the communion of saints, *i. e.* the real members of the invisible church, God alone certainly knows them in particular. But the visible members of it are saints by profession, not visibly contradicted by their habitual practice, Rom. i. 7. 1 Thess. v. 5. "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." Amongst these there is a special relation, as one visible body of Christ; those who are only baptized, though they may be complete members of the invisible body, being only incomplete members of the visible; and such as partake of the sacrament of the supper, complete ones, as admitted unto all external privileges of the communion of saints, even the highest of them, which is that of the Lord's table. And therefore there is a more full relation amongst communicants than others. Hence I would say,

1. Ye who are baptized, yet openly wicked and profane, or grossly ignorant of the fundamentals of religion, being come to years, are apostates in effect, having by your way visibly cut off yourselves from the communion of saints. For in your infancy ye were baptized into that body; but now by your unholy lives, ye openly declare yourselves to be none of it, and have taken on the devil's mark, and declare yourselves to be of the world lying in wickedness, Rom. ii. 25. To you I say,

1*st*, Have ye not thus openly rejected communion with God, that ye may maintain communion with the world? If you will have nothing ado with the family of heaven, do ye not renounce the Father of it for your Father? If you will be none of Christ's mystical body, do ye not refuse him for a head? Yea, sure, 1 John i. 3.

2*dly*, Had it not been better for you, if ye repent not, to have lived and died among Pagans, where the name of Christ was never heard, than to have been baptized into one body with the saints, and yet cast off all by your openly profane life? 2 Pet. ii. 21. "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

2. Ye who are saints by profession, yet only baptized, not partakers of the Lord's table, why do ye continue so? Who is there that values a communion or society, and does not endeavour to partake of all the privileges thereof, that may be of use to them? And, if ye have any value for the communion of saints, why do ye not lay out yourselves to be one bread with them? Sist your con-

sciences before the Lord, and it will not be excused from contempt of communion with Christ; with his mystical body, and the means thereof.

3. Ye who are saints by profession, and both baptized and partakers of the Lord's table, your external privilege is great; ye stand visibly related to the communion of saints, as visible members thereof. What a sad miss will it be, if you fail of real membership, and all your interest in it be but shew and pretence, as it will be, if ye be not real saints? It will be a poor plea at the great day, Luke xiii. 26.—"We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets."

1*st*, The society ye are visible apparent members of, is the mystical body of Christ, enriched with the highest special privileges of communion with the holy Trinity, to their eternal happiness. It will be a sad matter for you to cheat yourselves with a shew and semblance only of partaking with them; with the empty name, while ye have nothing of the thing, Gal. vi. 3. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

2*dly*, Ye are not far from the kingdom of God. Will ye lose it for not going forward the other step, the main step? Ye have gone through the several gates of the outer court of religion, the door of the inner court stands open to you. Will you not enter in there where the great glory of the house lies? 2 Tim. iii. 7. The form of godliness will carry you all the length ye have gone in these externals; but the power of it is necessary to evidence you a real member of that body.

3*dly*, Ye will lose your good company ere long, if ye get not a surer holding than mere visible membership; if ye be not bound up with them by the Spirit of holiness dwelling in you, as in them, the external bands of sacraments will not do, John xv. 2. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away." (1.) Ye may fall, 2 Tim. ii. 18, 19. out from among them, while you live, by apostacy, losing your fair leaves of a profession, as well as fruit, 1 John ii. 19. "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." (2.) Ye will certainly be separated from among them at death, Psal. cxxv. 5. and at judgment, Matth. xxv. 32.

4. Ye who are real saints, baptized with the Holy Ghost, and partakers of the invisible bread, as well as of the visible bread, in the Lord's supper, and the outward baptism, happy are ye in the thorough relation ye have with the communion of the saints. Ye are members of it to all intents and purposes, true and real members of the mystical body of Christ. Who can express the happiness of this privilege! I name only these.

1*st*, Ye have passed the gulf as to condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. Ye are set beyond the reach of the condemning law: the curse is removed, and ye have got your Father's blessing, and ye shall be blessed for time and eternity.

2*dly*, Ye are most honourably related, of the blood-royal of Heaven, since ye are of the mystical body of Christ. Christ's Father is your Father, John xx. 17. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Himself is your head, Eph. i. 22, 23. His Spirit is the bond of your mystical union with him, Eph. iv. 4. The church is your mother, and ye are her true and genuine children, Gal. vi. 26. The glorified saints are your grown brethren, come to their full stature, and ye are the little ones of the same family, Eph. iii. 15. Ay, and the angels too are so, Rev. xix. 10. All these fall to you by that membership.

3*dly*, Ye are infinitely enriched; for on that society, whereof ye are members, all things are settled by the God of all, 1 Cor. iii. 21. "All things are yours." The purchase of the head belongs to the members, and they have a title to all, and possess all in their head, Col. ii. 10. So ye are heirs of the world to come, heirs of glory, Rom. viii. 17. The covenant is your charter, the sacraments the seals of it.

4*thly*, Ye are perfectly secured, ye shall never perish, come what will come, John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ's natural body saw no corruption, even in a grave, and Christ's mystical body cannot perish, nor any member of it, John xiv. 19. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Ye are secured against,

(1.) Falling off. The tree-leg may fall off from the body, but the live-leg cannot: so hypocrites may fall away totally and finally; but the believer cannot, because a living member of Christ's body, John x. 28. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." A saint may fall down in a mire, he may fall back, but never fall off, nor fall away.

(2.) Cutting off. It is true, a child of God, as to his spiritual state, may be sick and sore; he may be bruised, wounded, and broken at such a rate, that he is of little or no use for the head, or for the body, but paining and bringing grief to both; and so think he is cut off, Psal. lxxxviii. 16. "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off." But no man will ever yield to the cutting off a member of his body, while it is in his power to cure it: and therefore, forasmuch as no case of a saint is beyond the reach of the

great Physician's skill, be their case what it will, they shall be cured at length, but never cut off.

(3.) Dying off. Spiritual death can never overtake them again; the infinite Spirit, the bond of the union, will always preserve the communication betwixt the head and members, John xiv. 19. And temporal death cannot dissolve the union; though it separate betwixt soul and body, each of them still remains united to Christ, 1 Thess. iv. 14. All these things are sealed by the sacrament.

II. The sacramental declaration is a matter of such weight, as deserves the deepest impression on one's spirit, and the tenderest regard in one's life, for all time thereafter. What that is ye have already heard, *viz.* a solemn declaration made by one's partaking, that he is of the communion of saints, joined with them into one mystical body of Christ. This is the declaration ye made by your act of partaking; and this is what, I say, deserves the deepest impression, &c. This will be clear, if ye consider,

I. The subject-matter of that declaration, which is most important. It concerns the mystical body of Christ, and their joining themselves unto it. Is it possible that one can have a weightier matter than that in hand? Does not eternity depend upon it? heaven or hell hang upon it to thy soul? Can any rational man think that to be a matter for one to play with, not to be in deepest earnest about it?

2. The parties to whom it is made, God and all the saints. The Lord has erected the saints into a society under Christ the alone head; they have their patent in heaven, and God has endowed them with the richest privileges. He sends out the gospel-proclamation, inviting all to join them, and offering them admission into it freely, withal making the partaking of the sacraments to be their declaration of entering into it, 1 Cor. xii. 13. So it is evident the partaker, by his action, says unto God, Is. xliv. 5. "I am the Lord's;" and to all the saints, Zech. viii. 23. "We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." If ye think light of making that declaration to them, do but consider the day when the Lord, and all his saints shall judge the world, and call you to an account of the declaration made to themselves.

3. The nature of that declaration. It is not indeed verbal, but real; not by words, but by an action, but that instituted by Christ, and so interpreted by him, as importing what it was designed to signify. As it is sacramental, it is of the nature of an oath, wherein God is invocated as judge and witness of the sincerity of your declaration. So that ye have in effect sworn yourselves of the communion of saints: and that is weighty.

4. The solemnity of it. It was not a business huddled up in secret, but done openly. The sacraments are public actions of their own nature: and therefore our church has wrested against private baptism and private communion. Ye were, I suppose, baptized in presence of the church, a lesser or greater number present. Ye did communicate in the Lord's supper in the face of the sun, and before many witnesses, in a most solemn manner. It was a very solemn covenanting betwixt God and Abram, Gen. xv. 9,—18. And your covenant-declaration was over the broken body and shed blood of Christ represented in the sacrament. What greater solemnity could there be?

Lastly, The amount of it. If ye do not sincerely cleave to it, but in your practice cast it behind your back, it will amount to a lie made to God himself, and to all his saints, in a matter of the utmost weight with the greatest solemnity, yea, to the guilt of perjury in effect. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for a lie made in the matter of the price of their land: what will be the punishment of a lie made with such solemnity to God, over the broken body of his Son? Matth. xxiv. 46. "He shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." Compared with Jer. xxxiv. 18,—20. "I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, —which they have made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof.—I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life." Wherefore,

1. Reflect on, and seriously consider what ye have avouched solemnly in partaking of the sacraments. Think on the action deeply, and the import of it, and impress it on your spirits. Look back all of you to your baptism.

Consider that in your baptism ye were given up to Christ, to lay hold on him by faith, Acts xix. 4. That therein ye declared and avouched your putting on Christ, Gal. iii. 27. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Your dying to sin, and living to righteousness, Rom. vi. 3, 4. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized unto his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead—even so we also should walk in newness of life." Your being of the mystical body of Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 13. "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." If people would seriously consider the import of their baptism, they who think themselves loose by their not being communicants, would see they are bound already; and that they do but cheat themselves in thinking, by

the neglect of the supper, to keep off these bands, which they are already firmly under; the which if they regard not, they will hear it afterwards to their cost.

Look back, communicants, to your partaking. Consider what ye have done. Ye have declared yourselves well pleased with the device of salvation through a crucified Christ, your taking of him to be your head and ruler, your joining yourselves to him by faith as lively members of his mystical body; that you are no more henceforth to be of the communion of the world lying in wickedness, but for the Lord only, wholly, and for ever; to take your part with the saints in the world, whatever your lot be, Psal. xlv. 10. Ye have said all this, and in effect sworn it, over the broken body of Christ, before angels and men.

Ye would do well to take some time alone to reflect on this, and to revive the impressions. We find the saints making such reflections, and putting themselves in mind of what they have done in such a case, Psal. xvi. 2. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord." Psal. cxix. 57, 106. "I have sworn, and I will perform it—that I will keep thy righteous judgments."

2. Never forget it, Jer. l. 5. People use not to forget their marriage-day, and the transactions of it. But, alas! the declared marriage-consent to Christ is often forgotten, notwithstanding the solemnity at it, Jer. ii. 32. "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number." They are men of prostituted consciences, who forget their oaths, and have wrought themselves clean of the impressions of them. But, alas! there are many, who sometimes made this solemn declaration, who seem to have quite forgot it, and the impressions are razed. But have ye forgot it? God hath sworn he will never forget it, Amos viii. 7. "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works." See Jer. ii. 2.

3. Remember it afresh on particular occasions, and awe your spirits with it, when temptations offer to come to you against it. Remember it as Jephthah did his vow, Judges xi. 35. "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

(1.) When your old lusts come back and fawn on you. No doubt they will come, but deny them, 1 Pet. i. 14 "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance." Remember ye have solemnly declared against them of your own accord, and to go back to them must be to go over the belly of God's bands on you.

(2.) When your old companions in sin would draw you aside with

them, then say, as Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Remember ye are not of their communion, but have solemnly renounced it, and have embodied with the saints. Is it not a very good reason not to serve the devil with men, because ye are not of the communion of his servants and society?

4. Do not retract it. It is too solemn and weighty a business to eat in again, Prov. xx. 25. "It is a snare to the man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry." Eccles. v. 5. "Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay." Some poor wretches expressly retract and renounce their sacramental vows, giving themselves to Satan. Many practically retract their sacramental declaration, particularly, (1.) By slighting the renewing of it, when the Lord puts an occasion of it in their hands. Thus many baptized persons never set themselves to partake of the Lord's table: some that have partaken of it sometime, leave it off again. Does not this plainly say, that, if they had that to do which is done in that matter, it should not be done for them now? and is not that retracting practically? Luke ix. 62. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Lot's wife's rueful looking back was dear to her. (2.) By living a loose and licentious life, as if one had never come under bonds to be the Lord's, Tit. i. 16. The language of the conversation of many is, "Let us break their bands," &c. O that such would consider, Heb. x. 38. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Lastly, Beware of every thing unsuitable to it. Ye have declared yourselves of the communion of saints, do nothing unsuitable to that communion, and your own solemn declaration. Let not the way of God be evil-spoken of through your unsuitable walk, Rom. ii. 24. Always remember your character as professed members of the communion of saints, and walk accordingly.

III. Separation from the men of the world lying in wickedness, and fixed standing off from the communion of sinners, is the necessary duty of all saints by profession, and particularly of communicants. Numb. xxiii. 9. "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." 2 Cor. vi. 14—17. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?—Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."

First, Whereto this holy separation extends itself.

1. *Negatively*, It doth not extend,

(1.) To the casting off the duties of natural affections, and relations to them, 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13. "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away," &c. Religion doth not weaken, but purify and strengthen natural affection, Rom. ix. 4. And the nearer that sinners stand related unto saints, they will have, and ought to have the greater concern for them, both for their spiritual and temporal good.

(2.) Not to the casting off civil converse with the men of the world, according as one has the call of providence thereto. 1 Cor. vii. 9, 10. "I wrote unto you—not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world." The saints are not shut up in a corner of the world by themselves, and therefore must needs have civil society with the men of this world. Neither doth religion divest Christians of humanity, or give them a liberty to be rude and indiscreet to others; but obliges them to "live peaceably with all men,"—Rom. xii. 18. to "honour them," 1 Pet. ii. 17. to be "courteous," Chap. iii. 8, 9.

(3.) Nor to the hindering of us to do them all the good we can. Nay, religion obligeth us to seek their good, 1 Tim. ii. 1. "I exhort therefore, that—supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men:" and to do good to their souls and bodies, as we have opportunity, Gal. vi. 10. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men."

(4.) Nor to the refusing to serve God, and worship him with them according to his own institution. This our Saviour himself did, Luke iv. 16. "And he came to Nazareth—and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read." Thus did the apostles also with the Jews. Thus, in all congregations of saints in the world, there are readily found some who have no appearance of saint-ship, whom yet they do not so shun as to refuse to worship God with them in his own way.

2. *Positively*, It extends to, and consists in,

(1.) Shunning all unnecessary society and familiarity with them, Psal. xxiv. 4, 5. "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil-doers: and will not sit with the wicked." They are not to be chosen for our companions of converse, or friendship, far less for companions of life, where we can have a choice; but we are to be companions of those that fear the Lord. The company of sinners has been fatal to

many, Prov. xiii. 20. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Men of the same employment, or that are going to one place, draw together: and should not Christians draw to Christians? It is sad to make Christian congregations and families, like Noah's ark, a receptacle for clean and unclean, 1 Cor. xvi. 33. "Be not deceived: Evil communications corrupt good manners."

(2.) Non-conformity to the world, Rom. xii. 2. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."—Ye must have another manner of life and conversation than they, if ye be of the communion of saints. It is a disgrace to religion, for the men of the world to have it to say of a saint by profession, "Behold, the man is as one of us." Make them not your rule, your example, nor do you think to stamp an offensive way into a lawful one, by the authority of the multitude. For the multitude is in the way to destruction, Matth. vii. 13.—"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:" and their principles are lax, and their practice licentious: they look on tenderness as niceness and preciseness, and wonder that you cannot take the same liberty they do, 1 Pet. iv. 4. "Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." But look you to God's word for your way, and see yourselves obliged to separate from them in your manner of life. See the general rule, Philip. iv. 8. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

(3.) Refusing communion with them in sin, Prov. i. 10. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Every man is for his own master's interest, and therefore they are for bringing you over into the service of the devil their master, as you will be for bringing them to Christ, if you be real Christians. Beware of fellowship with them in sin, Eph. v. 11. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Do not homologate their sinful courses by approving or consenting any manner of way thereto, far less by actual joining with them in their sin, Psal. l. 18. It is an affront to Heaven, but a pleasure to hell, to see Christ's sheep and the devil's goats yoked together in one sinful course. Nay, communicant, thou shouldst be like the ermine, that will by no means pass over the mud, that would stain its precious fur.

(4.) Refusing communion with them in the worship of God, in a false way, or even in a right way upon sinful terms. The saints must separate from all false worship, that is, worship which is not instituted by God himself wholly, but is mixed with human inventions and ordinances, Rev. xviii. 4. Nay, where the worship is pure, but some sinful thing is imposed upon you as a term of communion with the worshippers, you must refuse communion with them in worship on these terms, Rom. iii. 8. In these cases separation is not only lawful, but a necessary duty. And could I perceive either of these this day, in our case, in the communion of this church, I should not only think it my duty to separate, but also to press you to it. But though our mother has gone far back, she has not gone that length yet.

Secondly, Reasons of this separation. Because,

1. The communion of saints and the communion of sinners are opposite societies, 1 John v. 19. "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." So that joining to the one particularly infers separation from the other. You may as well imagine to bring east and west together, to make fire and water agree, as to make God's family and the devil's to agree; the seed of the woman and serpent. Wherefore, having joined to the communion of saints, ye must needs separate from the communion of sinners, Matth. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

2. The communion of saints is gathered out of the world lying in wickedness; so that separation from the world is wrapt up in the very constitution of the society of saints, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."—The mystical body of Christ is made up of those that were sometimes limbs of the devil: the branches ingrafted into the true vine were all broken off from our natural stock, the old Adam, that degenerate, dead, and killing stock: Christ's family of mankind is wholly made up of run-aways from the devil's family, Psal. xlv. 10. So that if ye be saints at all, ye are separatists.

3. The design of erecting the communion of saints is, that they may be a separate society by themselves, under Christ their head, to his honour, Numb. xxiii. 9. Eph. v. 25.—27. They are a peculiar people, 1 Pet. ii. 9. How will they answer the design of their erection, and the honour of their head, if they be not thus a separate people? Our Lord Christ has appointed badges of this communion, *viz.* the sacraments, to be external signs of distinction,

betwixt his and the world: and can it be thought but they will distinguish themselves by their practice?

4. The profession of saintship is the profession of this separation, 1 Cor. xii. 13. Let baptized persons and communicants be ashamed to say they do not pretend to be saints. If ye pretend not to be saints, renounce your pretensions to heaven, for none other come there, Heb. xii. 14. "Follow peace with men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." If ye pretend not to be saints, ye must own yourselves apostates, that have renounced and cast off the communion of saints. And, communicants, if ye pretend not to be saints, how durst ye adventure to sit down at the Lord's table? Well, in so far as ye were baptized and communicated, ye professed yourselves members of Christ's body, saints, and so separate from the world: therefore ye must live separate from them.

Wherefore, I say unto all saints by profession, and particularly communicants—"Save yourselves from this untoward generation," Acts ii. 14. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Shun all unnecessary society with those of the world lying in wickedness, conform not to their ways, have no communion with them in sin, nor in the service of God on sinful terms. Remember ye have solemnly declared yourselves of another communion than with them.

Motive 1. Consider the authority of God that binds this upon you. Eph. v. 7, 8, 11. "Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walks as children of light.—And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." The men and women of the world are separated from God, Eph. ii. 12. They are walking contrary to him: and therefore he will have you to separate from them, and be as a *people dwelling alone*, in the midst of the world's throng, because they are not of your communion.

2. The proof of the sincerity of your pretension to saintship depends very much on it. Psal. xvi. 2. 3. "My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." See also, Psal. xxvi. 4, 5. and xv. 4. It is evident men will choose such company as is most agreeable, in their opinion, to their own temper and disposition. And so one may very well guess at the disposition of a person by the company he chooses and delights in. And if thou art inclined to be a companion of the graceless, rather than of the gracious, it is a shrewd sign of a graceless heart.

3. The honour of God lies at stake here, Rom. ii. 24. If thou dost wear Christ's badge, and will not separate from the communion of sinners, but go with them in their way, religion will be wounded

through thy sides, and exposed to the mockery of profane men. And there are particularly three communions of sinners I would warn you against, as ye would not stab religion to the heart.

(1.) The communion of drunkards. O how unlike is that to the communion of saints at the Lord's table! For the Lord's sake communicants, when ye have the temptation, remember that word, 1 Cor. x. 21, 22. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?"

(2.) The communion of harlots. That is a communion of sinners, in an eminent manner, most inconsistent with the communion of saints, from which the apostle argues against it, 1 Cor. vi. 15—17. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What, know ye not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body?—But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

(3.) The communion of unjust men, in sinful dishonest ways of getting gain. Solomon speaks of this, Prov. i. 14, 15. It is dear bought that is got at the rate of God's displeasure.

Lastly, If ye separate not from them, ye will perish with them, Rev. xviii. 4. If ye partake of their sins, ye must partake of their plagues.

IV. There are certain duties of the communion of saints lying on all the members of it, by virtue of their membership: the which duties all saints by profession, and especially communicants, are solemnly engaged unto by their partaking of the sacraments.

To clear the first part of this inference, consider,

1. Every relation wherein one stands brings along with it a train of duties with respect to one's relatives. Relations are the joints of society, whereby persons are joined together for mutual usefulness; and their union is the ground of this debt they owe to one another. This holds in all relations, natural relations, and voluntary ones too made by consent. If one be a father of children, there are paternal duties lying on him by virtue of that relation; if he be a child of such parents, he owes a duty to them. If one become a member of a family, a kingdom, or any corporation, his membership lays him under such and such duties: wherefore it is not to be doubted, but, in as much as one is a member of the communion of saints, he is under obligations to the duties of that society.

2. There is a certain connection between privilege bestowed on a

man, and duty required of him. If one be admitted to the privilege of any society, he must with the honour receive the burden of duty belonging to it. If we receive the privilege of sons of God, we must be obedient children—"not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance," 1 Pet. i. 14. If we are members of the holy society whereof Christ is the head, we must be holy as he is, ver. 15, 16. "But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." If we be advanced to the communion of saints, we must act as becomes saints.

3. The principle of self-preservation, natural to all men, evidences this. If one be taken with a pain in his foot, all the members of the body will do their best to recover it; for if one member suffer, all suffer by reason of the union among them, and the evil, if not removed, creeps from one to another. So the apostle will have the saints in Corinth to take heed to a corrupt member, and use the means to recover him, from this principle of self-preservation, 1 Cor. v. 6. They who dwell together find themselves obliged to take heed every one to his neighbour's house, lest, when the neighbour's house is on fire, the flames also catch hold of their own: wherefore whosoever is a member of the communion of saints, must see a duty lying on him as such.

To clear the second part of the inference, consider,

1. By partaking of the sacrament one declares himself to be of the communion of saints, and consequently declares his being engaged to the duties of that communion, 1 John ii. 6. He voluntarily takes on the yoke, while he yokes himself with those who bear it. If one pretends to the privilege, he cannot in reason shake himself loose of the duty. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Luke vi. 46.

2. The sacraments are the external bands of our union with Christ the head, and the members, 1 Cor. xii. 13. Thereby we are sacramentally joined with the saints into one body, one bread. What is the partaking of them, then, less than solemnly, as it were by oath, engaging ourselves to the duties of the communion of saints?

Wherefore, all ye who are saints by profession, particularly communicants, as ye are one visible body of Christ, a visible communion of saints, I would press on you the duties which lie upon you as such. And they are of three sorts.

First, There are duties ye owe to the head. Christ is the head of this body the communion of saints, Eph. i. 22, 23. Ye are the pro-

fessed members of Christ, and of his body; consider and conscientiously practise the duty ye owe to your head.

1. Acknowledge not, nor own any other for head of the church or communion of saints, but Jesus Christ, Eph. v. 23. Men may distinguish as they will; but, as a body with more heads than one is a monster in nature, the scripture is plain, the communion of saints, which is the church, is no such monster, Eph. iv. 4, 5. "One body one Lord." The Roman Antichrist has long blasphemously arrogate to himself the headship and supremacy, and, at the lame reformation of England, it was taken from the pope there, but not restored to the royal Mediator, but made a part of their king's royal dignity. And in the days of Scotland's apostacy from their covenanted God, it was sacrilegiously usurped over this church by the powers then reigning, but contended against by the sufferings of many of this church, the Lord having made the Mediator's alone headship and supremacy a peculiar piece of this church's testimony, for which, alas! the present generation has not been duly jealous, the which has helped to bring this church into the miserable pass she is at this day. But why should any pretend to be head of the body of Christ? to be her head, while they cannot communicate life or spirit to her? This is Christ's peculiar prerogative, communicable to no mortal.

2. Depend by faith on Jesus Christ, as your head, for all. He is constituted the head of that society whereof ye are members, and by virtue of his headship their life lies in him, the direction and care of them lies on him.

1*st*, Depend on him for vital influences, Col. ii. 19.—"From which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." The believer's life lies in him, Col. iii. 3.—"Your life is hid with Christ in God." Therefore it cannot be lost, John xiv. 19.—"Because I live ye shall live also." The church is liable to great decay; she may be under a spiritual consumption, her pulse may beat very low, yet the sickness cannot be unto death, because there is still life in the head, which will be communicated more abundantly to the members. It is our business to live by faith, and draw virtue from him, and not to live on our inherent stock of life and grace, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Two things are here to be observed.

(1.) That there is a fulness lodged in Christ as the head of the body, to be communicated to all the members, Col. i. 19. A fulness of a fountain, which has not only enough for itself, but those that come to draw. There is a fulness of merit in him, for the life of pure pardon and comfort, and refreshment for the soul slain with a

sense of guilt: a fulness of Spirit for the life of sanctification; and ready access to it for all the members, John i. 16. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

(2.) The promises are the conduit-pipes by which influences of grace run into us, and faith is the drawing grace by which they are brought into the soul, Gal. ii. 20. The settled method of the dispensation of grace is that, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." Faith believes and applies the promises, and so life more abundantly is conveyed, Hos. xiv. 7.

2*dly*, Depend upon him for direction, Prov. iii. 5, 6. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps." The direction of the whole body belongs to the head, and the direction and guidance of all the members of Christ to him, by virtue of his headship. Therefore,

(1.) Take not the guiding of yourselves upon yourselves, trust not to your own wit and skill. If ye do, it is an usurping of Christ's prerogative, Is. lv. 5. and ye will not prosper in it, but stumble at noon-day. Where are the eyes but in the head? And therefore since Christ is the head of all the saints, he is appointed of the Father to be eyes to them in the wilderness. And the way of carnal wit has ay been ruining to churches, and particular members. The end of the way, pointed out by it, is always misery.

(2.) Look to him, and trust him for direction in all cases, Prov. iii. 3. God brings his people into a thicket of perplexities, and they are at their wits end, that faith may begin, and wait for a way when they can see none, Is. xlii. 16. Then he leads them by his word, providence, and Spirit. He is the pilot of the ship bound to Emmanuel's land with all the heirs of glory as passengers; their guide through the wayless wilderness, and they must keep their eye on him.

3*dly*, Depend on his care, 1 Pet. v. 7. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." The care of the whole communion of saints lies on Christ as their head, 1 Pet. ii. 25. The Father has given them to him, devolved the care of them upon him, in such sort that he is to be answerable for them, that none of them be lost, John vi. 39. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing."—Thus the hearts of his people may safely trust in him,

(1.) For provision. He, as their head, sees to the provision of their souls, "providing them green pastures, and still waters," Psal. xxiii. 2. He provides for their bodies, Is. xxxiii. 16.—"Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." The faith of Christ's

headship might still all anxious thoughts about one's through-bearing in any case whatsoever: for, come what will come, surely the head will ay see to the provision of the members.

(2.) For protection, Eph. v. 23. The saints have many enemies without and within; but, being settled under such a head, they may be sure of protection in all dangers. They will ay be safe, if not from trouble, yet in it, John xvi. 33. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." From the sting of it, that it shall do them no real harm, 1 Pet. iii. 13. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"

The saints are oft-times in a mighty stir, having great cares on their own heads: but O how happy would they be, if they would lay their cares all on their mystical head, and be at their duty, and leave them all on him! "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication—let your requests be made known unto God," Philip. iv. 6.

3. Subject yourselves wholly to his government, as to your head, Eph. v. 22—24. The head must rule the body, and Christ must rule you, if you be his members. Coming into the communion of saints, ye resign yourselves to the head of that society, for good and all, for ever.

(1.) Be obedient to his commands, Luke vi. 46. Our Lord Jesus has freed the members of his mystical body from the law as a covenant of works, but with his own hands he binds on them the yoke of obedience to the commands thereof as his own commands, 1 Cor. ix. 21. "Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." What confusion would there be in the natural body, for the head to be directing and pointing out one way, and the members going another? If Christ be your head, be ruled by him, renouncing your own will, and making his your law.

(2.) Resign yourselves to the disposals of his providence, 1 Sam. iii. 18. 2 Sam. 25, 26. The members of Christ have good reason for an absolute resignation of themselves and all their concerns to the Lord. The sovereignty of their head may silence them; the wisdom and love of their head to his own members may satisfy them, that whatever he does with them is best done. Their interest is his own, as that of the members is the interest of the head.

4. Let the interests of Jesus Christ, as your head, be your interest, his honour and glory be dear unto you, Psal. lxix. 9. "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." All the members of the body

are concerned for the head, as the head is for all the members; and those who are not touched with the care of Christ's honour in the world, give shrewd evidences they are none of his members. Then,

(1.) Act for the honour of your head, in every capacity seeking to advance his glory, Psal. xlv. 17. "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations."—There is a party in the world opposed to Christ, and they act against him. He has been going among us, saying, Who is on my side? And ye, by professing your submission to him, and declaring yourselves sacramentally to be of the communion of saints, have solemnly gone over to his side. Then act for him, his truths and ways; act for him in your families, in your neighbourhoods, wherever ye have access, whoever they are that act against him.

(2.) Be ready to suffer for him, as he may call you. Remember the communion of which ye have declared yourselves members, is, in this world, like a lily among thorns, which will be uneasy to them; and ye were warned of what is expected of all the members, Luke xiv. 26. In such a long time of peace, it is no wonder many limbs of the devil have got in among Christ's members, and many a hollow-hearted sinner is externally got into the communion of saints, and the saints by this time, are much the worse of their company; and between foolish virgins, and sleeping wise ones, the interest of Christ and religion is going to decay. So that the case of the church, in the common course of providence, seems to presage such a trying stroke as will awaken living members, and make many dead lifeless members fly off. But if Christ be your head, ye will be so minded as to suffer for him in his strength: ye know nothing is more natural, than, when a stroke is directed against one's head, to lift up one's arm to ward off the blow from the head. The rage of enemies is against Christ himself; and to quit Christ, and go over to their side, is the way many take in such a day. But the real members of Christ's body take not that way, more than a man will put out his head to keep off a stroke designed against his arms, the head being that which all the members will take special care of. In the mean time,

(3.) Suffer with him, Psal. lxix. 9. If the members suffer, the head suffers with them; and if the head be pained, all the body suffers with it; such is the sympathy. If Christ's members suffer, he sympathizeth with them, Acts ix. 4. And it is reasonable that they who think to reign with Christ after, suffer with him now. This is a day wherein the glorious head of the mystical body is suffering egregiously amongst us, and wherein all his members are called to mourn as suffering with him, Psal. cxix. 136. "Rivers of waters

run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Our head suffers from his open enemies, is wounded in the house of his friends, is suffering from professors and profane, ministers and people of all ranks. Happy they who shall be found mourning for the dishonours done to his name, truths, ways, &c. they are like to be hid in the day he rises up to resent the affronts.

Lastly, Take care of yourselves for the sake of your head. The follies of a wife reflect dishonour on her husband. Men will take care of their feet, for that, if they catch cold in them, it will fly up to their head. O saints by profession, communicants, remember that from the day you give up your names to Christ, and declare yourselves of the communion of saints, the honour of Christ is concerned in your walk at another rate than ever before. Your sins have a peculiar aggravation in them of dishonour to your head, Rom. ii. 24. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." Therefore, if ye have any respect to the honour of Christ, take heed that your conversation be as becometh the gospel.

Secondly, There are duties ye owe to the body in general, the mystical body of Christ, which is the church or communion of saints, Eph. i. 22, 23. Ye are professed members of this body, whereof Christ is the head; and this body is not confined to one particular church, but is made up of all the churches of Christ, and particular saints through the world, united to Christ by his Spirit dwelling in them. Consider, and practise the duties to this body, lying on you by virtue of your membership.

1. Sympathize with the body, as being yourselves of it, 1 Cor. xii. 26. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." The concerns of the church of Christ through the world should be the concern of every member. Distance of place, and differences in lesser things among those of the mystical body of Christ, should not take away this concern. Whosoever are allowed a place in Christ's mystical body, should have room allowed them in our hearts.

(1.) Mourn with the body under its affliction and evils. Such a kindly member was Nehemiah, chap. ii. 2. The distresses of foreign churches, as well as of our own, require our cordial sympathy; and the saints are naturally led to it, as knit with them to one common head.

(2.) Rejoice with it in its prosperity, 1 Cor. xii. 26. "And whether one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." The thriving of the kingdom of Christ, in any place through the world, should be refreshful to all the members of Christ, and fill

their mouths with praises. To bear a part in the joys and moans of the church every where, is the natural duty of all the members.

2. Pray continually for the welfare of the body, Psal. cxxii. 6. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." Is. lxii. 6, 7, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." The apostle is express for all saints, Eph. vi. 18. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Confine not your prayers to your own private case, but in all earnestness extend them to the church of Christ in the land where you live, and through the world. Prayer is a duty wherein all the members of Christ on earth can have actual communion; they meet at the throne of grace who never saw one another's face. It is the joint petition of all the saints, "Thy kingdom come." Pray for the building up, increase, peace, and purity of the church universal.

3. Take your lot with the body in foul or fair weather. Ye have said in effect, to this happy society, as Ruth i. 16. Sometimes there is a storm on the church of Christ, when the world lying in wickedness enjoys a calm. This occasions many naughty members to change sides, to desert the communion of saints, and fall in with the communion of sinners, 2 Tim. iv. 10. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Ye know not how soon ye may be tried in this point; but do ye resolutely adhere to the mystical body. To move you to which, consider these three things.

(1.) It is safer to be with the saints in their lowest condition, than with sinners in the highest pinnacle of prosperity: for the darkest night with the former will have a joyful morning, Psal. xcvii. 11. while the fairest day with the latter will issue in a black and fearful night, Eccles. vii. 5, 6.

(2.) The trial of sincerity of members is one of the great ends of the Lord's bringing trouble on the body, to try who are wise and foolish builders. It is true, when the natural body being sick is laid upon a-bed, the tree-leg is laid by, but all the living members of the body go with it. So, &c.

(3.) Backsliding is dangerous, and speaks one not fit for the kingdom of God, Luke ix. 62. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God;" it exposes one to the fearful displeasure of God, Heb. x. 38. "But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him;" and makes their case worse than if they had never set out heavenward.

4. Strive in all lawful ways to maintain and advance the interests

of the body; for the interest of the church is the interest of Christ, and dear therefore to every member. The truths of God are a sacred trust committed to the church, the pillar of truth; and they require our deep concern for the defence thereof, against the assaults of error, Jude 3. "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Christ's ordinances and institutions, and the several privileges thereof, which Satan and the world seek to deprive her of and corrupt, they are Christ's purchase for his mystical body, and therefore they are to be held fast, and the purity of them contended for, refusing to subject them or ourselves to the lusts of men, Gal. v. 1. 1 Cor. vii. 23. This will always require doing of us, holding hand to the maintenance of the precious interests of the mystical body, Psal. xlv. 17. and sometimes suffering, Heb. xii. 3, 4. It is a debt we owe to Christ, to the church, to posterity, and to our own souls.

Lastly, Be tender of the unity of the body, Eph. v. 3, 4. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," 1 Cor. xii. 25. Schisms, rents, and divisions in the church, are like wounds, cuts, and breaking of bones in the natural body, which exceedingly weaken it, and mar its beauty. They are the sin and judgment of a church, bringing dishonour to the Lord Jesus, marring the success of the gospel, and ruining the church at length: they bring much grief to tender souls, and expose religion to the mockery of enemies. The renting of the body of Christ has so much of horror about it, as may make it frightful to serious members. We must separate from none farther than they separate from Christ. We must not go into sin with members of the mystical body, more than with the world, under the pain of the displeasure of the Head: but we may lawfully serve the Lord in his own ordinances with sinful members; even as though when one foot is in a mire, the other must not go into the mire with it, yet there is no necessity of rending the one leg from the other, but the one may still walk with the other on clean ground.

Thirdly, There are duties ye owe to the members in particular, as ye are fellow-members with them of the same body, 1 Cor xii. 25. "That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another." It is not in your power to know certainly and infallibly who are real members of this body, as others cannot know the same concerning you: but the visible body of Christ is made up of saints by profession, not openly contradicted by their habitual practice, 1 Cor. i. 2. and as such they are admitted to the Lord's table, upon their desire.

So there is a particular visible relation among all saints by pro-

fession, and particularly among communicants, as visible members of the same mystical body of Christ. And therefore, though they owe a duty to all men, of love, good-will and beneficence, yet they are in a particular manner engaged to dutifulness to one another, as members of the visible communion of saints separate from the world.

Of this visible body or communion there are two sorts of members, official and simple ones; the former bearing office in the body, the other not so, but private persons; both members of the one body.

First, The official members are the office-bearers in the church, which is the body, and these are pastors, teachers, ruling-elders, and deacons. These are in the mystical body, as in man's natural body are the stomach, bearing the office of provisor for the whole body, the legs of supporters, the eyes of light to the whole body. And,

1. The duty of the official members to the rest may be summed up in these two, as they are, Acts xx. 28. viz.

1*st*, That they take heed to themselves. They must take heed to their feet, that they walk as becomes the gospel, and their office and character: to their tongues, that their doctrine and instructions be sound: and to their hearts, that these be upright, that so both word and walk may be holy. This I reckon a duty they owe to the rest of the members, as well as to themselves: because their holy tender walk is an ordinance of Christ for edifying the body, as well as sound doctrine, 1 Tim. iv. 12. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Pet. v. 3. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples unto the flock." And a scandalous, untender practice, in a church-officer, wounds not only his own conscience, but does a singular mischief to the church; as a hurt in the eye does not only wrong it, but the whole body.

2*dly*, That they take heed to the rest of the members over whom they are overseers, conscientiously following the duties of their respective offices in the body. It is not enough that they be good men in their private capacity; but that they be good ministers, elders, &c. in their public capacity. If the stomach had never such a good disposition, yet if it keep all the nourishment to itself only, the body would go to ruin: so, if church-officers ply not their official duty, the church suffers by them; they are useless, and worse than useless in the place they have in the body.

2. There is also a special duty that the rest of the members owe to the official members in the body. And this also may be summed up in two things.

1*st*, A peculiar concern for them, Gal. iv. 15. "For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." It is evident nature itself teacheth a peculiar concern for those members which are of the most diffusive usefulness in the natural body, by virtue of their office. Who would not take many thrusts through the leg rather than one through the heart? Who will put a toe in the balance with an eye? So, in the mystical body, however selfish many are, yet tender considering Christians will have a peculiar concern for official members.

(1.) This should proceed from a reverential estimation of them for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake." Their work is great; if they have the honour, they have the burden with it. Their work is for the honour of the head, and the profit of the body: and many a time they are like the candle, which, giving light to others, wastes itself. The Master has put an honour on them, and a reverend regard to them, as his officers, is a duty acceptable to God in Christ; yet this respect to them is but civil respect, though the motive is sacred.

(2.) It should vent itself in these.

[1.] Praying for them seriously, 2 Thess. iii. 1. "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." As their work is great, their needs, temptations, and trials are many. The better it fares with them, it is likely to fare the better with you: on the contrary, the worse it fares with with them, the worse it will fare with you. So much is your own case wrapt up in theirs. Pinch the stomach with hunger, the plump members of the body will soon fall: let the disorders of it be cured, and the rest of the body will soon feel the good of it. The devil strikes at them, that in them he may strike at the whole congregation. And ministers get not only comforts, but afflictions from the hand of God, for the good of the people, 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. Then even help them by your prayers that bear the burden.

[2.] Supporting of them cordially, 2 Tim. i. 16. "The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he oft refreshed me." Encourage them in their work, which will be a lightening under a heavy burden. Ye should support their credit, and cast a veil over their infirmities, Gal. iv. 14. "And my temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as angel of God, even as Christ Jesus;" and not make molehills in them mountains, as many do, who delight to blacken those of that character; unlike a

kindly member of the body, which will not spread, but endeavour to cure the weakness of an official member. And by divine right the rest owe them a competent maintenance according to their ability, 1 Cor. ix. 14. "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

2*dly*, A ready compliance with them in the work of their office, as the body goes whither the eyes direct, and the legs carry. An implicit faith and blind obedience is due to no man; but the mind of the Lord, held out by official members to the rest, is to be readily complied with, as they would not incur the displeasure of the head, 1 Thess. ii. 13. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

(1.) Imitate them, and follow their steps so far as they follow Christ. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," 1 Cor. xi. 1. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample," Philip. iii. 17. It is a part of the work of their office to be examples to the flock: and if that be a divine ordinance, for the edification of the church, surely the rest of the members are obliged to follow the example; and if they do not, their practice, so far as it is holy, as well as their doctrine, will be a witness against them. This is a point but little regarded. Many will tell how church-officers should walk, that never once look on themselves as obliged to follow their steps in the way of holiness: but the way of holiness is but one to ministers and people, though many are ready to make two of them, and take the broadest to themselves.

(2.) Submit to their instructions, admonitions, exhortations, &c. Heb. xiii. 17. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account."—What confusion would be in the natural body, if the members would not be guided by the light of the eye, or refuse the nourishment prepared by the stomach? So unnatural is it for the members of the mystical body, to be refractory to the official members in the discharge of their duty, to refuse their wholesome instructions, and to be satisfied without receiving benefit of ordinances dispensed by them.

O learn to look on ministers, and other church-officers, as standing in this capacity and relation to the body whereof ye are members. Consider them as members of the same mystical body with yourselves, and as official members, in whose welfare, and regular discharge of their office, your own welfare is wrapt up. This would,

(1.) Make you modestly and Christianly concerned that they may do their duty to the edification of the body, Psal. cxxxii. 9. For people to treat their ministers imperiously and disrespectfully, and supercilliously to dictate to them how to behave in the exercise of their office, as many do, and value themselves upon it, is an argument of pride and emptiness, of men's forgetting themselves, and regardlessness of that order which Christ the head has appointed in his mystical body. But for people, in a modest, serious, and Christian way, to excite their ministers to their duty, to inform and advise them of what may contribute to their carrying on the Lord's work most successfully, as the Lord's word gives them warrant to do it, Col. iv. 17. and their own soul's interest in the matter gives them a right to it; so a godly minister would bless God for having such an advantage. Are not all the members concerned for the eye, stomach, &c. in the natural body? But do they fall a beating of them, or overcharging them, that they may do their office? No, but with all tenderness to them they endeavour to enable them to do their respective offices.

(2.) It would put you on to a conscientious performance of your duty to them, your own soul's interest engaging you thereto, 1 Thes. v. 12. The fable of the members conspiring against the belly, to pinch it by withholding food, and being forced to give it over by reason that they themselves suffered by that means, may represent to us, as in an emblem, the folly of a people undutiful to their ministers to their own souls' great loss. The relation is so very near, that undutifulness on either hand must be hurtful to both.

Secondly, The simple members are such as are not office-bearers in the body, but private Christians. These owe a duty one to another, as members of the same mystical body. They are the visible members of the body of Christ, and so obliged to a native care for one another, 1 Cor. xii. 25.—"That the members should have the same care one for another." This extends to all such Christians, through the world, as we have occasion to do this duty towards; but in a special manner it is to be exercised towards those with whom we live in actual church-communion; and partakers of the Lord's supper together are in a special manner under this obligation. As ye *are one bread and one body*, so I would exhort you to make conscience of the duties you owe to one another as such.

Communicants are a separated body from others, distinguished from others, by the most solemn badge of the Christian profession: O if they would carry themselves as a people separated from the world to Jesus Christ, and joined together for him in one body, then would we see the benefit of communions, to the honour of Christ, the success of the gospel, and the good of their own souls.

The church is a society gathered out of the world, visibly joined together by the use of the sacraments; though they are in the world, they are not of it; and all the members of it should be a people dwelling alone, though in the midst of others, not reckoned among the nations. The truth is, there are many baptized in their infancy, who openly go over to the world's side; but all ye who are saints by profession, and particularly communicants, as ye profess yourselves to be of one body, and owe a Christian duty to them that are without; so I would lay before you the duties ye owe to one another, by virtue of your being visible members of one and the same body.

1. Love one another affectionately and sincerely, John xv. 12. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." To walk rightly in Christian communion, we must "walk in love," Eph. v. 2. Ye ought to love all men, being ready to desire their good, and do them all the good ye can: but ye owe brotherly love to all the visible members of Christ's body, which is so often recommended to the followers of Christ, 1 Thess. iii. 12. "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you." Rom. xii. 10. "Be kindly affectionated one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." O what an inconsistency is there in sitting down at the Lord's table together, the table of love, and the hearts of the partakers never united in love!

Object. *There are some so naughty in their way and manner of life, that it is hard to love them with brotherly love.*

Ans. The decay of love among the professors of Christianity is most visible at this day: and I must say, I despair of seeing due love among church-members restored, as long as the church among us is so mixed with, and so little separated from the world, and until the church be more distinguished from the nation, for as fond as we have been of a national church. God separated them in the late times by the fire of persecution, and then this love flamed among them: peace being restored, the church even mixed again with the world lying in wickedness, and that love died out of course. And while many are acknowledged as church-members, few, very few are loved as such. The New-Testament churches, though there were many hypocrites in them, yet they seem to have been constituted of visible saints, saints by profession, not visibly contradicted by their practices, Rom. i. 7. 1 Cor. i. 2. 1 Thess. v. 5. But more directly to the objection.

It is plain that brotherly love is to be proportioned to the degrees of the divine image discernible in any. And therefore, (1.) where

nothing of it appears, but people are openly wicked, we owe not this brotherly love to them: and every member of the church, private Christians as well as church officers, should endeavour that they partake not of that one bread in the sacrament. But, (2.) since the best are not free of some evils hanging about them, even to the discerning of others, we ought not to refuse brotherly love to any in whom any lineaments of God's image appears, though they have several things in their way altogether unlovely. It is the work of grace here to pick the pearl of grace out of a dunghill of sinful qualities, and to love the person for it, drawing a veil over many sins, 1 Pet. iv. 8. "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover a multitude of sins." And not to aggravate the ills about them, so as to hide their good from our eyes. Wo unto us if God should treat us so, yea, or the saints; wherefore love one another.

Motive (1.) It is the principle of the duties of church-communion, therefore called *the bond of perfectness in the church*, Col. iii. 12, 13, 14. In the primitive church they were most dutiful one to another; see the source of it, Acts iv. 32. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."—Where it prevails, it will make every one concerned for the good of his fellow-Christian, as for his own: where it is not, people, though in church-communion, will be ready to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" So the want of it turns all loose.

(2.) It is a badge of sincerity. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14. And without it we cannot prove ourselves true Christians, neither to ourselves, nor to the world of onlookers, John xiii. 35. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." For love to God will produce love to all those who bear his image.

(3.) It is the most natural result of the love of Christ to us, John xiii. 34.—"As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Never was there such love as that of Christ to his people in his dying for them: this shed abroad in the heart must needs make a loving disposition to him, and all that belong to him, for his sake.

Lastly, The near relation in which the followers of Christ stand to one another, pleads for it. They are fellow-members of the same body, joined together under one head, are members of one heavenly family, shall dwell together for evermore in heaven, and are joint objects of the world's hatred.

2. Bear with one another's weaknesses, failures, and infirmities. This has many branches, see Col. iii. 12, 13. "Put on therefore (as

the elect of God holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against another: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Be of a meek, patient, forbearing and forgiving temper, as to all men, so particularly to the members of the body of Christ, your fellow-members, and that because they are so. When we come to heaven we will have nothing to bear with; but till we come there, we will have occasion to exercise this grace towards others, and others towards us, since every one has their own imperfections, and there is not one to cast a stone at another on this score.

It is sad to see how easily professors are brought to cast at one another, how they cannot bear the least provocation, cannot forgive nor forget injuries; yea, many there are who rejoice in the failures of others, and are glad when they get an ill tale of them, or see some false step made by them, which they improve to run them down, and to the judging of their state. But consider, I pray you,

(1.) How the Lord bears with you, Eph. iv. 32. "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." O what would come of us if God would bear no more with us than we can bear with our fellow-servants! Dreadful would the measure be, if God should mete to us as we often do to our fellow-Christians. Does the Spirit of the Lord suffer us long, and will not we learn long-suffering? Are we forgiven talents, and will not forgive a few pence?

(2.) How the Lord bears with them. He overlooks many things in his people, though he does not approve of them. Shall not his example draw us to imitation?

(3.) Do not we ourselves stand in need of forbearance and forgiveness from others? Eccles. vii. 21, 22. "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee. For often times also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others." And are every day in hazard of being led aside with temptation, Gal. iv. 1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." Why should we then so forget ourselves, as not to allow to others what we need from them?

Lastly, Is not your interest in the matter, since you are of the body with them? When one hand labours under any sore, does not the other tenderly dress it, and even "those members of the body, which we think less honourable, do not we bestow abundant honour on them?" 1 Cor. xii. 23. So should we be ready to cast a veil of love over the infirmities of our brethren.

3. Watch over one another, Heb. x. 24. "And let us consider one another, to provoke to love, and to good works:" And xii. 15. "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." This is one of the principal duties of church-communion, and, if duly managed, would be of notable use for the honour of the head, and good of the body. It is true the Lord has appointed some watchmen, by office, in his church: but the law of love among the members of the mystical body, and the appointment of the head, makes also every one watchman over another.

I mean not to encourage men to a censorious prying into other men's matters, malicious searching into the hidden faults of others, to get something whereupon to make them odious. There are abundance of these who are spies from the devil's camp, improving their discoveries, fancied or real, to the dishonour of religion, and wounding the reputation of the brethren. But that, with an eye of love, you would observe one another's walk, for your mutual advantage, to imitate what is lovely in one another, and endeavour to amend what is amiss, or to prevent it. I take in under this these following things.

1*st*, Excite and stir up one another to a holy tender walk, in the several parts or duties of it, Heb. x. 24. Every member of the body should be a spur to another, to quicken his pace in the way of duty: so far should they be from being hinderances to, and clogs upon one another. All of us have a principle of sloth in us, which disposes us to flag and sink in our endeavours after holiness; and happy they who have a fellow Christian to quicken them by word and example, Prov. xxvii. 17. "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

2*dly*, Warn one another of snares in your way, as fellow-travellers towards Zion, 1 Thess. v. 14. "Now, we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly." One may see a snare before another, which he is not aware of that is in the greatest hazard of it; and it is a piece of Christian duty to warn one of it. This is to blow the trumpet as a watchman, the trumpet of private warning, the which if he does not, he is guilty of the sin his brother falls into, as not preventing it.

3*dly*, Confirm the staggering, and labour to bear up him who is ready to fall, 1 Thess. v. 14. "Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak." O what a substantial kindness did Abigail to David, in preventing the sin he was slipping into! An enemy is to be helped to raise up his ass lying under a burden, Exod. xxiii. 5. that he may not lose it: how much more, when one sees his brother under a

weight of temptation, is he to help him above it? like to be carried away with the stream, is he to catch hold of him, and do his best to draw him out?

Lastly, Admonish and reprove one another, in a spirit of meekness, for what is amiss, Rom. xv. 14. 2 Thess. iii. 15. Eph. v. 11. The infirmity cleaving to the best, with the variety of snares lying in our way, occasions every one sometimes to go wrong: and though it is easy to step aside, it is not so easy to recover, and come into the way again. This makes admonition necessary. There is a corrupt principle of self-love in us, that we are apt to look on our own faults with an eye prejudged in favour of them; therefore God has appointed this ordinance of mutual reproof and admonition, that each one holding the glass to his neighbour's face, he may see his spots, and wipe them off.

There is an authoritative admonition and reproof administered by church-officers, in virtue of their office, not only to hearers promiscuously, in the preaching of the word, but to persons particularly by themselves, in the way of discipline, 1 Tim. v. 20. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." Or privately, as Nathan did to David. See 1 Thess. v. 12. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." The which, though privately administered, is public, in respect of the public person who gives it. But of this we speak not.

There is a charitable admonition and reproof belonging to private persons, in virtue of the law of charity or love, which makes them monitors of, and reprovers to one another. This, in respect of the objects of it, is twofold.

1. General; common to all men within or without the church, whether visible members of the mystical body or not. It goes as wide as the holy law carries love to our neighbour. We are not to confine our charitable admonitions and reproofs to saints by profession, more than our love of benevolence and beneficence to them. We owe this duty, even to these of the world lying in wickedness, Eph. v. 11. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them," compare with verse 8. 12. and ought to do it, if so we may contribute to the plucking of the brands out of the burning.

It is true there are some arrived at such a daring pitch of wickedness, that there is not the least hope of doing them good by admonition or reproof; but, on the contrary, they are in hazard of being the worse of them. Concerning such our Lord's rule is, Matth. vii. 6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your

pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." But we should take heed that we do not rashly put men into this class: they may be the worse of a reproof at one time, who may be bettered by it at another time. And besides, a testimony against sin may be necessary, even in the case of such a one, in respect of others, witnesses thereto. But neither is it of this sort of admonition and reproof we speak. But,

2. Fraternal or brotherly admonition and reproof, competent to the visible members of the mystical body among themselves, 2 Thess. iii. 15. Though we owe this duty and kindness to all men, yet it is plain there are special obligations to it on saints by profession towards one another, and especially on communicants, who sit at one table of the Lord together. They are one body; they owe more than a common, *viz.* a brotherly love to one another; therefore, as in the natural body one hand washes the other by special duty: so let all communicants, and all saints by profession, know that they are obliged in conscience to mutual brotherly admonition and reproof, as they are "one body, and members one of another," Rom. xii. 5. And the sacraments, whether baptism or the Lord's supper, much more both, bind them thereto.

This ordinance and special duty of church-communion, which would be of exceeding usefulness, if rightly managed, as it is, alas, very little in use in our degenerate age, is often so marred, when it is used, that matters are made worse thereby, and the disease takes strength from the remedy. People's minds are alienated one from another; grudges are raised betwixt the parties; and so it is an occasion of evil. This ariseth from two causes.

First, The indiscreet management of the reprover, who often ministers his remedy in such a manner as that it is apt to irritate the corruption of his brother, instead of exciting his grace or goodness, as it ought. To rectify this, and remove this grand hinderance of benefit by this duty, I lay before you these following things.

1. Look upon this duty of fraternal admonition and reproof, as an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ, appointed by him, in his visible mystical body, for the spiritual good of the body. It is as really so, as preaching, prayer, sacraments, &c. are, Matth. xviii. 15. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." It has a blessing annexed to it, Prov. ix. 8. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." The consideration of this might influence men to go about it with awful solemnity, and to fear its being marred in their hands.

2. Begin at home, in thy own life and conversation, to purge it,

Matth. vii. 3, 5. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." A man who attempts to reprove his brother, and is guilty in the same or the like offence, is like a profane minister reproving profanity, who cannot expect success, but to have it cast up to him, *Physician cure thyself.* And this may let one see the mischief that his untenderness does, not only involving him in personal guilt, but in the guilt of his neighbour's sin too, whom he puts himself out of capacity to do good to.

Quest. *Is one in such a case free from this duty then?* *Answ.* No, by no means; one's own sin can never free him from this natural duty. His business is to set about the work, removing the impediment of the success by repentance before the Lord; and to accuse himself, and profess resolution to amend, in the first place, to his brother, and then to admonish him of his fault.

3. Be not precipitant and rash in your reproofs, but proceed on knowledge of the offence, in which so much moral certainty is required, as one cannot be justly blamed for rashness in thinking his brother to have offended so and so. The too ready crediting every thing that is spoken to our brother's disadvantage, or judging a thing to be an offence which may be is none; a readiness to take other men's actions by the wrong handle, when there is a right one, and thereupon to reprove them, will more argue the want of that charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 7. than prudent zeal for God's honour and our brother's good; yet, in doubtful matters, it will often be found duty prudently to insinuate that there is a suspicion, and what way he ought to remove it, 1 Thess. v. 22. "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

4. Let love to God's honour, and your brother's good, be the principle from which your admonition or reproof proceeds, and let it appear so, as much as may be, to his conviction, 2 Thess. iii. 15. "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." 2 Cor. ii. 4. "For, out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." So little of this appears in the reproofs of many, that they seem to the reproved rather reproaches than reproofs, and to show more contempt of the offender than love to him; and so the benefit by them is marred.

5. Be sure to found your admonitions or reproofs on the word of God, and convey them to your brother in a word of the holy scripture, the proper vehicle of a medicine for the soul or conscience.

Col. iii. 16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another." How else can you think to reach his conscience? The word is the instrument wherewith the Spirit works, and upon which we have ground to expect the blessing. And happy is he in whom the word dwells richly for this end.

6. Let it be managed with meekness, Gal. vi. 1. "Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Zeal and meekness are very consistent; they are fruits of the same holy Spirit. Beware of mixing your own passions with this duty; that is to bring common fire to God's altar, which mars the acceptance of the sacrifice with God, and is ready to mar the success of it with your brother, Jam. i. 20. "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." O it is hard to hold off splitting on this rock! Moses dashed on it, though the meekest man on earth, Numb. xx. 10. "Ye rebels." Which should make us jealous of ourselves upon such an occasion. Happy is that man who, when he declares God's wrath, can best hold down his own. In a special manner use mildness when the offence is a personal injury against yourselves. Men who are like lions in their own cause, and lambs in the cause of God, are selfish naughty men. They who are like lions in their own cause, and in God's too, owe their pretended zeal to their own spirits, not to the Spirit of God: but they who are as lambs in their own cause, but as lions in God's cause, leave convictions, in the breasts of others, that they are acted by God's Spirit.

7. Be patient and continue at the duty as occasion offers, though the fruit do not soon appear, or though one and the same person may give frequent occasion, 2 Pet. i. 13. "Yea I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance." Luke xvii. 3, 4. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Thus the Lord deals with us with long-suffering: so should we with our brethren. We should hold on as long as there is any hope of doing good by it.

Quest. *What should we do, when all we can do appears to be fruitless, and to no purpose? Answ.* Our Lord's directions are very plain in this case, though very little practised, Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17. "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother: but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established: and if he shall neglect to

hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Lastly, Be sure to take the fittest season for discharge of this duty. Every thing is beautiful in the season thereof, and there is a season for reproof, Eccles. iii. 7. The Spirit of the Lord takes notice of Abigail's observing it with her husband, 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37. And of the blessed man it is said, he brings forth fruit in his season, Psal. i. 3. Unseasonable reproofs rarely do good, but often do much harm.

Secondly, An undue entertainment of it by the reproved. God has prescribed, in his word, how admonitions and reproofs are to be taken, as well as how to be given. They are to be received, (1.) with love and esteem of the party that does us that good office, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. As we esteem the physician that would cure us of bodily blemishes, so him that endeavours to cure us of spiritual blemishes much more. (2.) With humbleness of mind, suffering ourselves to be told of our faults, in order to our amendment, Heb. xiii. 22. "And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." So David, Psal. cxli. 5. "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." (3.) With a practical answering of the end of it. This our Lord calls *hearing of our brother*, Matth. xviii. 15. Compare Prov. xv. 31, 32. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.—He that heareth reproof getteth understanding."

But where are they to be found who thus entertain admonitions and reproofs? Nay, the most part cannot endure to be reproved or admonished of any thing amiss in their way. Instead of giving a Christian entertainment to admonition or reproof, their proud hearts rise in passion against him that dares tell them their fault; they will defend their deed, which in calm blood their own conscience condemns; and if they can gather any dirt against the reprover, right or wrong, they will be sure to fling it in his face on that occasion. This deserves to be lamented with tears of blood, if we could command them. To such I would say,

1. Admonition and reproof is an ordinance of Christ, appointed by him in his church among the visible members of his body, Matth. xviii. 15. and downwards, 1 Tim. v. 20. Why are ye angry at your brother for doing his duty he is obliged to do under the pain of the Lord's displeasure? Why will ye be reckoned members of Christ's family, and will not submit to the ordinances and laws of his house? Is it fit the church of Christ should be as when there was no king in Israel, every one doing that which is right in his own eyes?

2. It is that which thy brother has a special interest in, and a right to see to, as being a member of the body. Nothing more ordinary than, What are you concerned? The eye might as well question the concern of the hand in drawing a mote out of it, or the face in wiping a spot off it. "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee."—1 Cor. xi. 21. His concern is plain, he is a visible member of the same body with you, and your faults which give offence, affect him and the body too. In a corporation of tradesmen, every member has a right to quarrel what is done against the laws of the corporation. In a neighbourhood of husbandmen, every one has a right to quarrel what is done against the laws of the neighbourhood. Yet, in a society of Christians by profession, one may not be allowed to reprove another for what is done against the laws of Christianity. "Be astonished, O ye heavens!"

3. It is thy own interest, and the advantage of thy soul, to be admonished and reproved for thy faults. Prov. vi. 23.—"Reproofs of instruction are the way of life." It is a real kindness done thee, Psal. cxli. 5. Why wilt thou be angry with thy mercy? Many are ruined through the want of a faithful friend to admonish them of what is amiss in their way. Men do not readily espy their own faults in full light; and when they have none to say it is ill they do, they are apt to flatter themselves in their iniquity to their own ruin. But admonition and reproof is the way to repentance and reformation.

4. The trial of thy state whether thou art a real Christian or not, depends more on the way of entertaining admonition and reproof than thou art aware of, Prov. ix. 8. "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee." It is a good sign of a gracious soul, to entertain it in a Christian way, Prov. xv. 5.—"He that regardeth reproof is prudent." It speaks a humble soul, one ready and willing to know his faults and amend them, to whom conscience is dearer than credit, and the approbation of God than the applause of men. But, on the contrary, it is a very black mark in one not to be able to bear admonition and reproof, Prov. xii. 1. "Whoso loveth instruction, loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish," and chap. xv. 12. See how the Spirit of God describes a wicked generation, Is. xxix. 21. "That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate."—Amos v. 10. "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly." This temper of spirit speaks a man to be unwilling to see his sin, and therefore unwilling to part with it; to be a lover of darkness rather than light; a lover of his own credit more than God's ho-

nour; to be proud, selfish, without due regard either to God or his brother. It is true a good man may, at a time, take a just reproof very ill, as Asa, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. but it is not the habitual disposition of his spirit.

Lastly, Not taking with admonition and reproof is a forerunner of ruin, Prov. xv. 10.—"He that hateth reproof shall die;" and xxix. 1. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." As it is a high pitch of sin, and runs up the offence to a height, so it is a presage of the approach of a heavy stroke—"Let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet shall fall with thee in the night,"—Hos. iv. 4, 5. They who will not take an admonition or reproof from their brethren, may expect God will reach them one from heaven, that they shall not get shifted. It is a terrible remark made on Eli's sons, their not taking with reproof, 1 Sam. ii. 25, "They hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them." See Prov. v. 12. The sum of what is said, you may find, Prov. xxv. 12. "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold: so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." Let the reprover manage wisely, and the reproved entertain it obediently, so shall it be profitable to both. The impediments thus removed, I would press this duty of brotherly admonition and reproof among all the visible members of the mystical body, all saints by profession, and communicants particularly. Admonish and reprove one another, for what ye discern to be offensive in one another's way. Make conscience of this duty.

Mot. 1. For the sake of the head, that is, for Christ's sake. The sins of professors and communicants do, in a special manner, reflect dishonour on Jesus Christ, 2 Sam. xii. 14. And therefore, while we see the visible members of that body dishonouring their head, our hearts should stir within us for that dishonour. Here is a fair occasion to vent our zeal for Christ, to declare our sympathy with him, Psal. lxix. 9, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." And, in such a case, ye are upon your trials as to what regard ye have to his honour.

2. For the sake of the body. The welfare of the mystical body lies in the welfare of the members: it cannot be right while the members are wrong. Consider the offending party as a member of the body, and thou wilt see the body of Christ is concerned in his not walking with a straight foot, which may stir thee up to admonish him. Scandalous practices or offensive steps in a member, reflect dishonour on the whole body, Eccl. ix. 18. Yea, and the

contagion, if not timely prevented, is apt to creep from one member to another, and so to annoy the whole body, Heb. xii. 15, "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." For this cause Paul openly reproved Peter, Gal. ii. 14.

3. For the sake of the offending member. It is one of the greatest offices of love thou canst do to his soul, to admonish him of his offence, James v. 19, 20. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Thou wilt thereby do him a double kindness. (1.) Remove sin from off him, which is a load so much the more dangerous, as he is not aware of it, Lev. xix. 17. It is hating him, in God's account, not to rebuke him, as it would be not to draw him out of the mire, when he is sticking in it. If he had disjointed a leg or arm, wouldst thou not set it again if thou couldst? Such harm do wrong steps in a Christian's way to his soul; therefore, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness," Gal. vi. 1. (2.) Prevent his sinning more in that way. One wrong step, if not righted, makes way for another; and much guilt is contracted by one's not being told of his fault, being in that case, "like a son left to himself, who brings his father to shame;" whereas a faithful reproof might prevent the repeating of the same folly. And as it would thus be a kindness to him in respect of the putting away of sin, so consequently in preventing strokes from the hand of the Lord.

4. For your own sake. God has laid this duty upon you, under the pain of his displeasure; so your own interest is engaged here. As ye would not partake of other men's sins, make conscience of this duty, without which the guilt will creep over on your own souls, and the punishment thereof with it, Eph. v. 11. And why should one by the neglect of this duty, adopt other men's sins, defile his own conscience, and mar his peace with God? Better displease all the world than make a breach betwixt God and your own souls.

5. For the sake of the common badge of the visible mystical body of the Christian profession, the holy sacraments, 1 Tim. vi. 1. Is it not cutting to hear men say, Take up your professors, your communicants? O that professors would consider the Christian profession to be of that dignity, and so tender a point, that they might tremble to think of bringing a stain upon it by their loose walking! O that communicants would remember, that though the partaking of the Lord's table is in itself a passing action, yet it is an abiding holy sign, whereby they are externally distinguished for Christ; and that

they would beware of such practices as may render their badge mean and despised in the eyes of the world. Or if some will be so untender as not duly to regard it, that others would be so tender thereof as to check them for their offensive carriage, out of a regard to the holy badge of the Christian profession, the holy sacraments.

Lastly, For the sake of those who are not of the body, but of the world lying in wickedness. It is a piece of Christian duty to regard these, Col. iv. 5. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." God writes his impartiality in his judgments, in not passing by the offences of those called by his own name, Is. xlii. 4. And it would much contribute to commend religion to those who are strangers to it, and impress them with honourable thoughts of the communion of saints, if the members of it were faithful to check every thing among themselves, Acts v. 1. and downwards, compare with ver. 13. otherwise snares and stumbling-blocks are laid before the blind world.

4. Walk holily and tenderly, so as your conversation may be exemplary and edifying to one another, Matth. v. 16. Heb. xii. 14. Rom. xiv. 19. The church, in scripture-language, is often called Heaven, and every member thereof ought to be as a shining light there, and not the pastors only, Phil. ii. 15, 16. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life." This is the most effectual way of edifying one another, *viz.* by a holy example. And it is one great advantage of church-communion, whereby one's soul is edified, while the members labour so to walk. For understanding of this, two things are to be marked.

1*st*, There is a holiness of heart, and a holiness of conversation, Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. The former is the spring of the latter; the former lies in the inner man, the latter in the outward. Holiness of heart is a personal duty, which not the church, but God and one's own conscience can take notice of directly: therefore I speak not of it, while treating of the duties of the members of the body one to another. Holiness of conversation is a relative duty, in so far as our fellow-members ought to see it in us all, and may see it where it is to their own edification: and we owe it as an indispensible duty to the body whereof we are members, *viz.* that our conversation be exemplarily holy and tender, Cant. i. 8. For we are not only to know Christ, and speak of him, but to live unto him, Phil. i. 21. "For me to live is Christ." This is the holiness and tenderness I speak of.

2*dly*, Though it is abominable hypocrisy to do good works to be seen of men, that we may gain their applause; yet it is not only

lawful, but a necessary duty of Christianity, and particularly of church-communion, to walk so as your walk may be exemplary, and to have an eye to the edification of others in walking tenderly before them, Matth. v. 16. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." 2 Thess. iii. 9. Though our internal religion lies only betwixt God and us, yet our outward acts are apt to be copied by our brethren; therefore we should endeavour to get the copy fair, chiefly to please God, and next to edify our brethren.

Now this exemplary, tender, holy walking, required of every visible church-member, for edifying the fellow-members of the body, hath many branches, being as broad as the whole law of God on the outward man. I shall reduce them to these two general heads.

1. Be exemplarily holy and tender, with respect to the doing part of religion and a holy life, Luke i. 6. The members of Christ are not to be idle, but active, dying to sin, and living unto righteousness. Be exemplarily holy and tender,

(1.) With respect to duty, Eccles. ix. 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Let your conversation be filled up with the performance and conscientious discharge of every duty required at your hands, that it may be uniform, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psal. cxix. 6. Let your duty to God be conscientiously performed in all the parts of it; since he is your Creator and Redeemer, refuse him no piece of required service, for ye are wholly his, Acts xxvii. 23. Be conscientious in your duty to man for God's sake, and so join in your practice what God has joined in the commandment, Acts xxiv. 16. Neglect not personal duty which lies betwixt you, Tit. ii. 12. and have a special regard to the duties of your station, and the relation wherein ye stand, if ever ye would have your conversation edifying. God has set every one of us in some station and relation, and the conscientious practice of the duty of our respective stations makes a man or woman shine, however low a sphere they move in, 1 Tim. vi. 1. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed," 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. There is no person who may not this way edify the body of Christ, and be an useful member for their own and others' good.

(2.) With respect to sin, Jude 23. O the mischief done by the sinful liberty church-members take to themselves! They fearlessly break down and go over the holy hedge, and others, seeing them before, do follow after, and so they prove ruining to themselves and others too, Matth. xviii. 7. Think no sin little, since it is an offence

against a great God, and makes way for greater, not only in yourselves, but in others too. For the sake of the head, and the rest of the members, abhor it as hell, Rom. xii. 9. and 1 Thess. v. 22.

(3.) In the practice and use of indifferent things. There the apostle's rule should take place, Rom. xv. 1, 2. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." It is not enough that the thing is in itself lawful; ye are also, in respect of your brother, to consider if it be expedient, 1 Cor. vi. 12. What is in itself indifferent, may in its circumstances be rendered unlawful to you, in so far as ye cannot do it without the scandal of your brother, Rom. xiv. 20. The neglect of this is one of the crying sins of this day. Men consider their ownselves, without regard to others, and hence fearlessly lay stumbling-blocks before others. The sense of the duties of church-communion is much lost among all parties in this church this day: in the natural body a thing will be refused, though it be good for the stomach, if it be ill for the head, &c. But, in this degenerate generation, the members of the visible mystical body are grown so selfish, that to please themselves they can drive over others, without any regard to their good or hurt.

2. Be exemplarily holy and tender in the suffering part of religion. And be so for the edification of the body. Others have been so for our good, Heb. xii. 1. so should we be for the good of others. What crosses and afflictions the Lord may be pleased to lay on you, bear christianly, with patience, submission, and resignation, bringing forth the fruit of them, Rom. xii. 12. "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." They are trials, and in them we ought to carry so, as God may be honoured and our brethren edified, while we are by divine providence brought upon the stage to undergo our respective trials. Consider here,

(1.) God, in laying afflictions on some of his people, has an eye to others' good, as well as that of the afflicted party: even as blood is let out of the arm or foot, not for the good of the arm or foot only, but the good of the whole body; though it is only one member that gets the wound, yet the design is for the rest of the members too, 2 Cor. i. 6. "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." As when one is examined the rest are instructed; when one of the children of a family is chastised, the rest are thereby bettered; so our gracious God often teaches many at the expence of one only.

(2.) A Christian behaviour under trouble is one of the most influential points of Christian practice, likely to have the greatest efficacy on others, spectators of it and witnesses to it, or to whose knowledge it may come, Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. Hence the blood of the martyrs was said to be the seed of the church: and the cause of the gospel never lost by persecution, while the persecuted were honestly carried through. Doing well is ready to influence others, but suffering well is far more so. A cross carried evenly and Christianly has a certain force to draw others to imitation, as it is most admired.

(3.) Those who, by reason of their afflictions, seem to themselves to be laid by as useless, are mistaken; they have a most precious opportunity put into their hand, to be serviceable to Christ and the members of his body, Col. i. 24. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake." God has brought them forth on the stage, to take trial of their suffering graces, for the instructing, exciting, strengthening, and edifying of others. Job was a man who did much for God in his day; but the suffering part of his life has been of the greatest use in all ages since, and will be to the end. The Psalmist David complains, Psal. xxxi. 12. that he was *like a broken vessel;* but every sherd of that broken pot has been of good use to the church of Christ since, and has helped to heal many.

(4.) Wherefore Christians under their afflictions ought to consider that they suffer as members of the body, bearing that part allotted for them of the sufferings appointed for mystical Christ; for the sufferings of Christ personal are at an end, but the sufferings of Christ mystical are but yet a filling up, Col. i. 24. This would arm them with patience, as considering their particular trials to be, in some sort, a common cause for the good of others, as well as their own; and may excite them, in the blackest lines of providence, to cast such a fair copy as others may write after.

To press this duty of church-communion, consider,

1. The interest of God's name and honour in it, John xv. 8. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." The fruitfulness of those who are planted in the house of the Lord brings much glory to the Master of the house; and their barrenness brings much dishonour to him before the world. And should not the one be vigorously pursued, and the other guarded against, by all those whom he has "called into the fellowship of his Son?"

2. The interest of your fellow-members in it. It is a dark world; they are the most useful in the communion of saints, who most shine

as lights. Every action of yours, every piece of your carriage, being in church communion, is apt to be copied. By your tender example you may do good to many; by your untenderness you may prove stumbling-blocks to others.

3. The interest of the gospel in it, Tit. ii. 9, 10. "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters—not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." It is the glory of the gospel, that the power thereof appears in the lives of the professors thereof, stamping holiness and tenderness upon every part of their own walk: and, on the other hand, it brings great scandal on the doctrine of Christ, that the professors of it are unholy in their lives.

Lastly, Your own interest is in it for time and eternity. As ye sow ye shall reap, both for kind and quantity.

5. Bear one another's burdens of afflictions, crosses, temptations and trials, Gal. vi. 2. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Heb. xiii. 3. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." 1 Cor. xii. 26. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." This is a natural duty of the members of one body. That part of the communion of saints, which is above, is got quite beyond these; but those of them who are yet in the world, are in the place of trial, where the clouds return after the rain. But not being standing each one by himself, but in the body with other fellow-members, bearing their part of the sufferings allotted for the body, there is all reason that the afflicted's lot should be looked on as a common cause, and each one should help to bear the burden with them; their burden of simple affliction, or burden of temptation. And,

1. Have a cordial sympathy with them, and hearty concern in their afflictions and temptations; and so express it as they may know it, Rom. xii. 15. Let your hearts be touched with fellow-feeling of the distresses of your brethren; and therefore "put on bowels of mercy," &c. Col. iii. 12. and lay aside selfishness and unconcernedness with the case of others. It is a mortified member that is not touched with the pain of other members of the body; and he who has no kindly sympathy with the saints, in their troubles and temptations, seems not to partake of the spirit of that communion, Amos vi. 1, 6. "Wo to them that are at ease in Zion—that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." And let them know it: for what comfort can it afford to them, though your bowels yearn toward them, if they understand it not? if they see it not, it is all a case to them as if it were not.

2. Bear their burden as it affects them, and not always as it would affect yourselves, Rom. xv. 1. Many weigh the afflictions and temptations of others in their own balance, so find them very light; and therefore pass them as unworthy of their concern. Job xii. 5. "He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease." But the true way of judging of the weight of these things is, as they are apt to affect the afflicted party, and with that weight we should bear them, 2 Cor. xi. 29. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" One mote will disturb the eye, when a hundred of them lying on the hand will create no trouble, no hazard. Shall the hand then be unconcerned to pluck it out? That may make a heavy affliction and dangerous temptation to one, which would be a very light one, and perhaps none at all to another. And it may be a greater act of Christian obedience in one to make his way through a temptation or affliction in itself small, than in another through one ten times greater; as the widow's throwing in her mite was more than all the gifts of the rich men, Luke xxi. 1, 2, 3.

3. Let your mouths be open to enquire into their griefs, as far as Christian prudence will allow, and your hearts open to receive their moans, Col. iv. 7, 8. "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you —whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts." If any member of the natural body be sore and wounded, how natural is it for the hand tenderly to uncover and open it up, the eye to pry with compassion on the several parts of the sore, &c. even when they cannot remove the trouble? Such is the case of human nature in its present state of weakness, that there is a kind of relief, though but a sorry one, in venting of their grief into the bosom of one where it may be entertained with sympathy. The want of which makes afflictions and temptations often like a fire shut up, preying on one's spirits, Psal. xxxix. 3. and has made the best of men complain heavily, Mic. vii. 1, 5. and downwards.

4. Comfort, encourage, advise, and direct them suitable to their case, 1 Thess. iv. 18. This is all that is within the compass of one's power to do for their afflicted brethren, in some cases, Matth. xxv. 36. And thus may one by a word fitly spoken, be a happy instrument to refresh the bowels of the afflicted, and blunt the edge of a temptation, 2 Tim. i. 16. Job xvi. 5.—"I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief." And here a special tenderness is required; and, with a due regard to the circumstances of the afflicted, all harshness is to be evited, lest one add affliction to the afflicted; which was the rock Job's

friends split upon, and caused him to make that affecting resentment, Job xvi. 4, 5.

5. What you can in conscience and reason ward off, or carry off of their burden, do it, for ye *are members one of another*; Rom. xii. 5. Philip. ii. 4. "Look not every one on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." So ye are to give all your spiritual or temporal assistances to the lessening or removing of their trial in a way of duty. This should particularly appear in shielding one another's reputation, which is often blasted by venomous tongues and open ears, which together lay a heavy burden on the suffering party, Prov. xxv. 23.

6. In troubles and temptations from men, support and stand by the oppressed for their deliverance, especially in the cause of Christ and religion, 2 Tim. iv. 16. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." And chap. i. 16, 17. "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me." We are not born for ourselves, but for God's honour, and the good of our brethren. And the leaving of those helpless, on whom, by the divine providence, the storm of the trial or temptation falls, is a forsaking and being ashamed of the cause of Christ in the world. Thus ought we to bear one another's burden, as members of the body of Christ. To stir you up to which necessary duty, consider,

Lastly, Earnest prayer is to be made to God for our brethren under their trials, that they may be supported, refreshed, and delivered, according to the will of God; and this whether their trials be from the immediate hand of God or man, Acts xii. 5. "Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2. "Finally, brethren, pray for us—that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men."—This is a special way of bearing one another's burdens, to bear them before the throne of grace, and to wrestle with God for them there. This is one of the great advantages of the communion of saints, *viz.* a communion of prayers, that when any known weight lies upon a member, the rest cry unto the head on behalf of it. And here I offer four things.

(1.) It is much to be wished that Christians praying together, when occasionally meeting, were more in use. And particularly that those who are in distress would not only require ministers or elders to pray with them, but even fellow-Christians visiting them, and that such should readily comply with such a desire, both ob-

serving circumstances so as to discern when and in what cases it may be to edification. It is very agreeable to the communion of saints, and to that love and sympathy which ought to be among the members of Christ.

(2.) As it is a commendable practice in the church, to require public prayers on behalf of the sick or those otherwise afflicted; and as the minister is the mouth of the congregation, so ye would consider that ye ought affectionately to join in these prayers, as parties nearly concerned, and whose prayers for the afflicted are desired, forasmuch as the prayers desired are the prayers of the congregation, and not the minister's only. The language of these prayers is, Brethren, pray for us. And therefore, I beseech you, let not this be a matter of mere form to you, in which you may only notice what is begged for them; but let your hearts go along with the words even the length of the throne, for a brother or sister in distress.

(3.) Carry home with you the case of those to your family and secret prayers, and confine not your concern for them within the walls of the church. If the afflictions of others do touch your hearts as they ought, you may carry a copy of the paper home with you on your sympathizing hearts, to mind you to put up petitions for them in your families and in secret. If ye have neglected this formerly, mend it in time to come, and, when ye have done it, know ye have done no more than what is your duty, Heb. xiii. 3. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

(4.) Some cases of others in affliction may require of you extraordinary prayer, by setting some time apart for that very end, either yourselves alone, or in conjunction with fellow-Christians. So David in the case of the child, "fasted, and went in and lay all night on the earth," 2 Sam. xii. 16. And in the case of others too, Psal. xxxv. 13, 14. And so in the case of Peter in prison, Acts xii. 12. "Many were gathered together in the house of Mary, praying." The serious consideration of the kind of the affliction, and of the person under it, with respect to the honour of God, the good of the church, and your own particular interest depending thereon, must determine these cases.

I will add, by the bye, that where prayers are desired for those in affliction, the affliction being removed, thanksgiving should likewise be desired. It is but the prevalency of an unallowable custom, to give up notes for praying for the sick, and yet to give none for thanksgiving for the recovery of the party when recovered. If the congregation weep with them, it is reasonable they have occasion to

rejoice with them too; if to petition for the mercy, to give thanks for it too, Luke xvii. 17, 18.

Motive 1. Consider it is the special command of your head, Gal. vi. 2. it is a "fulfilling of the law of Christ," *viz.* the law of love. Our Lord Jesus loved his people so as to die for them, therefore he requires them particularly to love one another. His compassion to them was without a parallel, therefore he will have them full of bowels towards each other; he bare the burdens of the whole, the burden of guilt, and curse due to them for sin, therefore he will have them bear one another's burden. Here is the special reason why it is called the law of Christ.

2. Ye have the example of the head for it, John xiii. 15. "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." He is touched with all their afflictions, Isa. lxiii. 9. If any annoy them, he reckons himself persecuted, Acts ix. 4. A most tender sympathy he has with them—"for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye," Zech. ii. 8. And as for their temptations, he is not unconcerned about them, Heb. iv. 15. Imitate your head, O members of the body: sympathize with them whom Christ sympathizes with, lest ye pour contempt on those whom Christ honours, and forget the afflictions of those whom he tenderly remembers.

3. The trials and distresses of others are designed for your good, as was said before. Our merciful Father, in compassion to the rest, teaches them at the expence of one. Does it not then require your sympathy, that others are afflicted for your sake? Col. i. 24. Should not ye answer the design of providence, in exercising of those duties and graces which providence lays afflictions and temptations on others to bring forth into exercise on you? He lays the rod on your fellow-members, to bring you and many others to the throne of grace.

4. What is thy brother's case to-day, may be thine to-morrow. Is he under affliction now? Thou mayest be in the same hereafter, or in another as hard for thee to bear, as it is for him now to bear his. Is he under temptation? As fast as thou seemest to stand now, thou mayst be as low under the same or a worse, to-morrow, as he is to-day, Gal. vi. 1. 1 Cor. x. 12. Refuse him not that help of thee, which thou mayst need of him ere long. There is no trouble, no temptation, which befals one member of the body, which another can certainly secure himself from.

Lastly, It is necessary to evidence thy being of the body, 1 Cor. xii. 26. Col. iii. 12. How can it be accounted a live member, that has not sympathy with the rest in pain? but that Christian sympa-

thy of bearing one another's burden speaks union with the members of the head. That hardness, selfishness, and carelessness about the trials and temptations of others, which is found in many, cannot but darken the evidences of good people so far as it prevails, and cast them as naught in whom it reigns.

6. Edify one another by Christian conference, Eph. iv. 29. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." 1 Thess. v. 11. "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another." In so far as the body is made up of several Christians, they ought to have suitable conference, for the edification of one another as members, as they are brought together by divine providence. It is the duty of joint members of any lawful society, to treat among themselves of the interests of it and its concerns. Fellow-travellers to one place are to be useful this way to one another. Christians are a society by themselves, the communion of saints, they are fellow-travellers towards Zion: Christian conference is the native result of the relation. I shall branch out this in these things.

1. Those who by providence are cast together ordinarily, whether in a family or neighbourhood, so as they must ordinarily converse together, should labour to be useful to, and edify one another by their communication, Heb. iii. 13. "But exhort one another daily while it is called, To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Religion should be carried by us into all our relations, and however we be posted in particular societies, we should always remember our general calling and relation, as visible members of the mystical body, that we converse together as becometh saints.

2. Occasional meetings of Christians together should be thus improved. There is a commandment "to speak of those things while men walk by the way together," Deut. vi. 7. We find the two disciples going to Emmaus thus exercised, and a happy issue of their conference, Luke xxiv. 14, 15. Were men's spirits habitually heavenly, even occasional encounters would produce something of this sort betwixt fellow-Christians.

3. Christians meeting together on holy and spiritual sacred occasions should, in a special manner, be thus improven, as on Sabbath-days, and at sermons. Then it is the day calls for it, and the Lord's word and ordinances minister matter of Christian conference. Days have been, when people going to or coming from ordinances, have been sweetly employed this way, Psal. lv. 14. and between sermons, either went alone for prayer and meditation, or gathered together for

Christian conference. But, alas! this is much decayed, and among none more perhaps than among us. I often see people standing busy speaking together, after the public worship is begun, and with my eye or voice, must labour to break off the conference, the which if it were not worldly, would surely be broken off by the beginning of the public worship. The worldly discourse in our churchyard* has been, and is an offence and stumbling-block to strangers, and is like to turn to the reproach of the place, whereby God is highly dishonoured. This is a horrid profanation of the Lord's day, an open contempt of it and his ordinances, which speaks the gospel sapless and tasteless to you, and is a presage of a stroke, Neh. xiii. 18. Alas! how think ye one should preach to people making such preparation for hearing? How shall ye profit by preaching after such communications? Is. lviii. 13, 14. How shall we pray for God's blessing on your labours and substance, or look to be heard, when ye sacrilegiously rob God of his own day at this rate? I beseech you, for the Lord's sake, and your own souls' sake, and as ye would not provoke the Lord to leave me as an idol-shepherd among you, who shall have no power to profit your souls, reform this practice, and either go by yourselves for prayer and meditation, or converse like Christians.

4. Fellow-Christians should communicate their cases one to another, as far as Christian prudence will allow, and strengthen, instruct, and edify one another, Psal. lxvi. 16. The wise man observes, that "two are better than one; for if the one fall, the other will lift him up," Eccles. iv. 10. And happy are they who thus have a friend in need. How many might have instruction in what they know not, the edge of temptations blunted, their hearts warmed, and their souls bettered, by a mutual communication of cases, troubles, temptations, and experiences?

Lastly, Appointed private meetings of several Christians together, for prayer and Christian conference for their mutual edification, provided it mar not family-worship, nor be improved to the prejudice of public ordinances, as they are warranted by the word of God, so might be of good use (if rightly improved) to the advancement of religion, Acts xii. 12. Mal. iii. 16. Col. iii. 16. By this means Christians might improve both in gifts and grace, in knowledge and love, and they have been blessed of God to these holy ends unto many: and ordinarily, in parishes where the gospel begins to thrive, they are set up almost as naturally as the birds draw together in the

* What the worthy author here complains of is far from being a singular case, but may too justly be applied to most other places.

spring: and, where the gospel work is going back, they decay, owing their fall, either to coldrifeness in God's matters creeping in, or to the fiery heat of division.

Motive 1. The necessity and usefulness of it is great. It is necessary and useful for the honour of God, 1 Pet. ii. 9. for the good of our brethren, Rom. xiv. 19. and for our own good, Prov. xi. 25 The tongue is called our glory, because it is the instrument of glorifying God, and so doing good to others: and, without this, men are chargeable with laying up their talents in a napkin, hiding their light under a bushel.

2. The thriving or decay of religion goes hand in hand with it. Look to the times wherein religion prospered, and you will find that "they who feared the Lord spoke often one to another;" and as that wore away, so religion decayed. Nearest the heart nearest the mouth. Where the fire is burning on the hearth, the smoke is going forth of the chimney. Where religion is lively in the heart, it will appear in men's converse.

Lastly, Times of abounding sin and approaching wrath is a special season for it, and calls the fearers of God to set about it, Mal. iii. 16. Such is the day in which we live, "wherein iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold." God is removing the pillars, and his judgments are abroad in the world, and lesser strokes are sent as forerunners of greater.

7. and *lastly*, Be ready to assist the needy members, and to communicate of your worldly goods to the poor in the body. 1 John iii. 17, 18. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Rom. xii. 13. "Distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality." It is much to be regretted, that many of the poor, especially the vagrant ones, have no semblance of piety or membership in the body of Christ. Yet even these have a right to supply from us, because they are God's creatures. But the poor saints have a double right to it, not only as God's creatures, but as members of Christ, and therefore the church is bound particularly to see to them, Gal. vi. 10. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." The Lord in his wisdom has seen it meet to make some of his members poor in the world, not only for their own trial, but the trial of their brethren, who are obliged to supply them, Deut. xv. 11. "For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy

brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land," Matth. xxvi. 11. This duty I branch out in five particulars.

1. Seasonably act towards the relief of those members who are fallen into decay in the world, as ye have opportunity, Lev. xxv. 35. "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee." As the keeping of a man that is stumbling from quite falling down, is much alike with helping him up when he is fallen; so the relieving of a man at the brink of poverty, is much alike with relieving him in it. This duty I take to be aimed at, Luke vi. 35. "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." And if it were more exercised, there would be fewer poor than there are.

2. Abound in private distributions towards the poor members, at your houses, or otherwise, as you have occasion, Matth. vi. 3. Heb. xiii. 16. "But, to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Occasions of this nature are ordinary, which try what sort of stewards we are of the good things of this life which providence has put into our hand. It was Job's comfort in his poverty, that when he was wealthy, he communicated of what he had to the poor, Job xxxi. 19. and downward.

3. Conscientiously give in to the Sabbath's collections, to be distributed by the church. God has appointed these, and the Lord Jesus has appointed church-officers for taking care of the poor in the church, Acts vi. 1, 3. And what they are to give out is to come into their hand by the church-collections, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." So this matter of the Sabbath-day's collections is not to be looked upon as a business of mere fashion, but as a divine ordinance in the church, which should make people, out of conscience towards God, to give into it, in a suitable proportion to the substance God has put in their hands.

4. Grudge not extraordinary distributions, towards the relief not only of those of other congregations, but of other churches, whom you never saw, nor will perhaps see in the face, Rom. xv. 26. "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution for the saints which are at Jerusalem." This is a duty of the communion of saints; for all the churches and congregations of saints in the world make but one body of Christ, and they who are at the greatest distance from you are your brethren. Why should any then think themselves unconcerned with their distress?"

Lastly, Be ready to give of your substance for pious uses, towards

the advancing of the good of the body, which is the church, Prov. iii. 9. There are several occasions people have of laying out money for pious uses, which want of due consideration makes them to do grudgingly. But if thou hast an occasion put into thy hand, by this money to honour God, to bring about good for the souls of others, to contribute to the good of the church, thou art to look on it as a special duty of the communion of saints, and an occasion of bestowing it to a noble use.

As to what one is to give, every one must conscientiously determine that for himself: but here is the general rule, *viz.* that people are to give in a proportion to the necessity of their brethren, and their own ability, Rom. xii. 13. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. One is to eye,

1. The necessity of their brethren: for that may be too little for some, which may be more than enough to others whose straits are not so great. And withal, in weighing this their necessity, it is to be noticed, if the poor walk suitable to their condition; for neither religion nor reason requires us to foster them in voluntary idleness, or in living beyond the bounds of their condition, 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11.

2. Their own ability. What one gives must be his own, and not another's, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering. Those to whom God has given much, of them much is required; those who have little, the less is required. Our own strait condition does not altogether excuse from it. The widow's two mites were required and accepted; yea, people are bound to labour for that they may have what to give to the poor, Eph. iv. 28. "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." And whatever is in their power to do for them, they are obliged to do, Acts iii. 6.

Motive 1. Consider our Lord Christ looks on what is given to his poor members as given to himself, and will make honourable mention of it at the great day, Matth. xxv. 35, 36. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Christ is in them, his image upon them, they and he are one, and shall not their fellow-members regard them as such, in supplying of their necessities? We are to part with our all to him at his call. Sometimes he requires it by persecutors, and then we are to give it up at his call for his sake: sometimes by his needy members; and then also it is given to him, *Lent to the Lord.*

2. We are not absolute masters of our substance, but stewards of

it, accountable to the Lord for our management. The church is God's household, and Christ has secured, by the covenant, necessaries for this life to all that are his, Is. xxxiii. 16.—"Bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure." Only he has put the portion of the poor members in the hands of others, to give it out to them, according to their necessity, and what of it is in their hand, Luke xvi. 10, 11, 12. Therefore we shall be unfaithful stewards, if we distribute not to the necessities of the saints.

3. They are fellow-members of the same body with you, and fellow-heirs of the same inheritance, Gal. vi. 10. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." The spiritual relation that is betwixt us and them challengeth it as a debt of love. Have we not all one Father, one elder Brother, one Spirit knitting us to one Head, and one heritage for ever, to which men are admitted without respect of persons? Suppose several men were travelling together into a far country to receive a common inheritance, would not those who have abundance of spending money supply those who are run short in the way? So should we do with the poor saints.

4. It tends much to the honour of God, and the credit of the gospel and of the church. Every society looks on themselves as obliged to see to the supply of the wants of their members: and should not the communion of saints be exemplary therein, considering the most strait ties among them? By our Lord's own verdict, "Giving is a more blessed thing than receiving," Acts xx. 35. therein we do in a special manner appear in likeness to the Lord, Luke vi. 35, 36. And O should we not honour with our substance him, who, for our sakes, became poor, that we might be rich?" 2 Cor. viii. 9.

Lastly, It has a reward of grace annexed to it, being rightly performed. It is the best way to secure a throughbearing for us and ours, Prov. xxviii. 27. "He that giveth to the poor shall not have lack." What we have is liable to many accidents; but laying out for God is better security than laying up what God calls for at our hand, Eccles. xi. 1. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." What is thus laid out brings in to the giver, Prov. iii. 9, 10. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Solomon observes the accomplishment of it, Prov. xi. 24. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." And though our good works do not merit either the temporal or eternal reward of glory; yet even the eternal reward will be according to our works, and that is

an eternal truth, 2 Cor. ix. 6. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

V. Admission to the Lord's table is a matter of the greatest weight and concern, to be managed and gone about with all solemn seriousness and caution. Whoso considers that, being one bread, we declare ourselves thereby one body of Christ, must needs see this, and that there is great need to take heed to our feet in entering on that holy ground. And considering that the church is a communion of saints in profession, whereof Christ is the head, there is need to look well who be admitted thereto as complete members of the visible body. And here it is evident,

1. That there ought not to be a promiscuous admission to the Lord's table, which some have contended for. It is not only contrary to our Lord's express command, Matth. vii. 6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs," but contrary to the nature, use and ends of that ordinance. It is a distinguishing sign, to put a visible difference betwixt the communion of saints and communion of sinners; and therefore cannot be common to both. Shall the badge of the members of Christ be put upon those who bear Satan's mark on their foreheads? Shall they be declared of the body of Christ, who are, to the conviction of the church, *of the world lying in wickedness?*

2. Admission to the Lord's table is an act of church power and government: for, if the church be a body or society by itself, and the Lord's table the special privilege of that body, whereby one is declared and allowed to be of that body, there can be no lawful admission thereto but in the way of church power and government. For what corporation is there, whereinto one may be admitted without an act of the governing part of it? Our Lord has appointed governors in his church, 1 Cor. xii. 28. who have a power to admit to, and debar from the sacrament, Matth. vii. 6; and this belongs not to the minister alone, but to the society of ruling church-officers, that is, the minister and elders; for the keys of government, to which admission belongs, are not given to one, but to the unity of church-officers, 2 Cor. ii. 6.

3. There ought to be a due trial of those who are admitted to the Lord's table, that it may be seen, whether or not those who seek to be admitted are qualified according to the laws of the visible kingdom of Christ, lest such be brought in as may bring a stain on the society, and corrupt and defile them, instead of edifying them. This also flows from the nature of the church as a separate society, and a communion of saints. For, to bring in hand over head, without consideration of the persons, is much a case with throwing open the

doors of the sanctuary, that any who pleases may enter. It is true, since God only knows the heart, no doubt hypocrites and naughty persons may be let in as honest-hearted Christians; the devil's goats may come in by their likeness to Christ's sheep; but if their outside be promising, that is all the church can judge of, other things are left to God's judgment.

4. The whole matter is of the greatest weight and deepest concern; and that,

1*st*, To the admitters, who are, as it were, the porters of the Lord's house, and should look well whom they admit to the Lord's table, that it be not profaned through their default. There are two things requisite to give one a right before the church, to the Lord's table. (1.) A competent measure of knowledge; without this people cannot examine themselves, nor rightly discern the Lord's body, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29. and they are declared none of the Lord's people, Is. xxvii. 11. "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour." The minister, whose office it is to teach, is the most competent, though perhaps not the only judge in this point. (2.) A blameless life, not scandalous and profane, Matth. vii. 6. These cannot be fit guests at the holy table, whose conversation is openly wicked. And ministers and elders, who are, by their office, overseers of the manners of the people, are to enquire into this. And whoso duly considers it, will find it a most weighty piece of work.

2*dly*, To the church, and every member thereof. Is it not the concern of every one in the society, who be admitted as fellow-members of the body, to partake of the greatest privileges of the church? It is the duty of all to do what in them lies, that God's ordinance be not profaned, that the communion of saints, which is one bread, receive not harm by the bringing in thereto such as will stain and defile it, and that they be not partakers of other men's sins, 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. "Your glorying is not good: know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Quest. *What can and ought private Christians to do in this case? Ans.* If the case or offence of the party being such as renders him unworthy to be admitted, cannot be removed by private admonition, either through the party's obstinacy, or the publicness of it, in that case, they ought to bring it to the church-officers, in order to stop the admission, Matth. xviii. 15. If they do not this, they partake of the guilt; if they do, they have delivered their own souls, though

the church-officers do not their duty, and may partake with a good conscience.

3*dly*, To the party himself. It is the taking on of the external public badge of the communion of saints, a solemn declaration of his being one body with the members of Christ, the which must needs be of great concern to any one who duly considers how solemn and awful an action this is. To go about this work ignorantly, indeliberately and rashly, without due preparation, is a taking of God's name in vain with a witness. Wherefore,

(1.) Let those who have a hand in admission to the Lord's table, be careful and conscientious to approve themselves to God in this weighty matter. (2.) Let the whole communicants be concerned to see to it as they have opportunity. (3.) Let persons looking that way duly consider the weight of the matter.

Those who have been once orderly admitted, may at every occasion thereafter claim their privilege in case they have kept free from public scandal. But as for those who have not yet been orderly admitted, they ought to make it a matter of time, that there be no hurry in their admission. I have often complained, that some never shew their desire of admission, till there be little time left either for themselves or us to consider of that weighty business. I have endeavoured to prevent that, by giving intimation some weeks before, but almost still in vain as to some. May we be helped to take some method hereafter that may effectually prevent it. Is it not highly reasonable, that those who by office are to see to this, be satisfied both as to the knowledge and conversation of those they must admit? And why should people be so conceited of themselves as not to allow a competent time for this? Let all consider,

1. The honour of Christ, how it is concerned in this matter, that that be not said concerning us, Rom. ii. 24.—"The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."—The comely order of the Lord's house is for his sake to be carefully observed.

2. The ordinance is in hazard of profanation, and all are in hazard of being guilty of it. The admitters bring guilt on themselves when they are negligent in this matter, Ezek. xliv. 7. "In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread."—The whole church when they are not in their duty, Lev. v. 1. and the party, Ezek. xxiii. 39.

3. The church is in hazard of being defiled, Heb. xii. 15.—"Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Some profane leaven brought in, may soon leaven the whole lump.

4. The party who comes unwarrantably runs a terrible risk 1 Cor. xi. 29. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Lastly, The sacrament of the Lord's supper is to be highly prized, and the partakers of it to walk worthy of their character and privilege.

1. Let all those who are come to the years of discretion duly value this high privilege, and timeously prepare themselves to partake of it. They must needs be under mighty prejudices, or very untender persons, who, without much ado, live without this ordinance time after time.

2. Let those who are partakers remember their character, as declared visible members of the body of Christ, and walk towards the Lord, and towards one another, as those who are the Lord's by personal dedication, and live in church-communion.

Thus have I shewn you what a society professors and communicants are, and what lies upon them by virtue of their being thus joined in church-communion.

END OF VOLUME III.

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